



Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office

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Distinguished Co-Chairs, colleagues,

My name is Bruce Knotts. I am the Chair of the NGO Committee on Human Rights and Director of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office. Kudos to the co-chairs for compiling the zero draft document vis-à-vis the multitude of varying inputs incorporated within. This is no easy feat. In general UUUNO commends the work done to contextualize and congeal the goals and targets, but I speak now to bring light to the discourse on *fundamental* Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Human Rights that is essentially non-existent throughout the document or merely hinted at by generalized terms. In this vein, our intervention will be in regards to the proposed goal 10, with focus on targets for reducing inequalities among social groups *within* countries.

We wish to reiterate the crucial importance of solidifying Goal 10 as a stand-alone goal and are aligned with "the Statement on Why a Stand-alone Goal on Equality is Essential, which was jointly developed by civil society groups and co-signed by over 90 organizations." We adamantly oppose the merging of Goal 10 with any other goal, as any merge would detract from the importance of addressing inequalities in their own contexts and as they exist on the ground. We also support amendments of targets 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4 and 10.7 as proposed in the coordinated Civil Society statement on Equality (Goal 10) presented to you by Sowmyaa Bharadwaj of Beyond 2015 this past Tuesday.

On Target 10.1: Discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, *including* criminalization of same-sex relations and institutional denial of and violations against SOGI Human rights should seek to be wholly eliminated by 2020. Institutionalized discrimination against any minority demographic, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) demographics is not conducive to the Post 2015 Development Agenda and should be eliminated with utmost haste. Bigotry in any way, shape, or form is detrimental to all dimensions of sustainable development, particularly the social and economic dimensions, and counter-productive to our work here. The World Bank conducted a case study entitled "The Cost of Homophobia", on the anti-LGBTQ legislature passed in India that showed these laws are correlated to the "loss of productivity" and "lost wages" that translates into about three-million "lost workers" (or .6% of India's workforce). Monetarily, this translates into 244 million U.S. dollars lost in labor output, and 1.25 billion U.S. dollars lost in GDP (or 0.1-1.7% of GDP in India). The magnitude of these figures should galvanize the international community to seek the elimination of all discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, including those that hinder the development of LGBTQ persons.

Affirming the Worth and Dignity of All People



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**\*Amended target may read, “By 2020, eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, and practices based on immutable characteristics”.**

On Target 10.5: It may be understood by some that the LGBTQ demographic is implied in this target by the language “marginalized and people in vulnerable situations”, and we appreciate the message of inclusiveness this language implies. But a mere implication does not suffice in actually securing and protecting LGBTQ inclusion in societies and their SOGI rights on the ground. Too much will be left to interpretation in the capitals. Our experience with this discourse shows that even the most inclusive language excludes LGBTQ persons. This is why reference to the LGBTQ demographic must be explicit. We affirm that without explicit inclusion of Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Human rights language in this target and within other targets across goals, there will be discrimination and violence against people based on their immutable characteristics. Put explicit language into the goals to prevent thugs roaming the streets to beat people up and destroy their homes and businesses while police watch and cheer only because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Do this for the rule of law and equal protection for all of us, and to promote an all-inclusive approach to the sustainable development agenda.

**\*Amended target may read, “Empower, promote, and protect the social, political, and economic inclusion and rights of the poor, the marginalized and people in vulnerable situations, including indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQ persons, minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons and children and youth”.**

On Target 10.6: This amendment would address harmful cultural practices accordingly, and those that may infringe upon or violate fundamental Human Rights that are defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**\*Amended target may read, “Promote and respect cultural diversity as a vehicle for development in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.**

We also wish to see the addition of a target and relevant indicator under this goal pertaining to adequate social protection measures for the demographics addressed in target 10.5. This would be to ensure an all-inclusive sustainable development (SD) agenda that encapsulates all the dimensions of SD, and in part so governments and judicial authorities/law officials will be held accountable for discriminatory laws, policies, and practices - institutional or otherwise.

**\*The additional target may read, “Create, promote, and sustain adequate social protection measures for the poor, the marginalized and people in most vulnerable situations, including LGBTQ persons, indigenous peoples, women, minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons, and children and youth with a relevant indicator to monitor progress and implementation of those social protection measures.**



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Chairs, I understand the sensitivity of the matters I bring to your attention today. Sensitive as they are, they cannot be ignored any longer. If you want sustainable development in peaceful law abiding societies, you cannot make one's race, religion, height, sexual orientation or gender identity illegal or a target for violence and extreme discrimination. We promote and wish to see implemented a purposeful and all-inclusive sustainable development agenda. "No one should be left behind" in the Post 2015 Development Agenda and I implore you to keep this ideology in the forefront of your minds when revising the zero draft. I thank you Co-Chairs.