



### **General Debate 2020 HLS statement by the LGBTI Stakeholder Group**

The LGBTI Stakeholder Group is composed of global, regional, and national civil society organizations and activists concerned about the inclusion of lesbians, gays, bisexual, trans and intersex people (LGBTI) in the 2030 Agenda.

The Decade of Action and Delivery has started with a worldwide challenge caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has further fortified the understanding that to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, no one can be left behind. Existing inequalities between countries and between people within countries are made more visible during this pandemic and they continue to enable hunger, poverty, unemployment, gender and sexual violence, poor access to health, sanitation and education, and all the development issues that the Agenda 2030 aims to resolve. Improving laws, policies and their implementation to promote, protect and foster equality is key in still achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The design and implementation of policies and programs responding to this public health emergency must have the involvement of community-based organizations, to ensure that the needs of different populations are sufficiently and properly considered. Furthermore, as governments invest in food security, economic stimulus and relief packages against the impacts of COVID-19, it is vital to ensure that these efforts will first reach marginalized populations who face intersecting vulnerabilities.

Exclusion, including exclusion from sustainable development doesn't only hurt specific populations, inequalities impact societies as a whole. States have made a commitment to create conditions for everyone to actively participate and contribute to the development of their communities and benefit from their participation. Leaving no one behind is an obligation, and it is in the best interest of States to tap into human potential, expertise, partnership, diverse capacities and ideas of all people who make up their societies.

People's lives are impacted by inequalities based on multiple identities and circumstances, like age, employment status, ability, indigeneity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, HIV/AIDS status, geography or migration status, and more. Violence, poverty and discrimination of people based on these identities often remain unseen and unrecognized to those in power. The COVID-19 pandemic has further deepened these already existing inequalities, impacting the poorest and most marginalized hardest, including LGBTI and gender-non conforming populations.

Relief programs and policies to address the COVID-19 crisis have remained inaccessible to the communities who require them most and, all around the world, governments have used the pandemic to subvert democracy and violate human rights. We are seeing governments undermine democratic foundations to pass regressive or punitive laws, increase militarization, make opportunistic political or private gains, target human rights defenders or particular groups or people, and perpetuate discrimination, prejudice, and xenophobia. Further, response policies have increased restrictions on citizens' rights to assembly, heightened surveillance, and encroached on civil society's ability to carry out urgent action, organize, and push for accountability and inclusion in multilateral fora and mechanisms, including at the United Nations.

Since the inception of the Sustainable Development Goals, civil society has been a key player in their realization, in addressing and eradicating poverty, promoting shared prosperity, advocating for the protection of the planet, and to achieve gender equality. However, the shrinking spaces for civil society activity and the attack on democracy across the world have impacted civil society organizations and individuals safety and security, as well as their ability to serve our communities on the ground. This reality is made even more visible during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Accelerated action relies on tapping into the transformative power, resilience and resourcefulness of populations that remain largely oppressed, marginalized and excluded. Structural barriers such as extreme stigma, discrimination, and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, reinforced by criminalizing and punitive laws and policies in many countries, continue to stifle the power and progress needed towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all, including LGBTI populations.

A post pandemic world is not one where people and organizations can revert to conducting business as usual. We see and feel the impacts of this crisis on our communities, on our ability to survive, and on our future sustainability. There is ample room, precedent, and creativity to include LGBTI people in Sustainable Development Goals-related actions in order to leave no one behind, design effective development programs, and realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Activation of populations that are left furthest behind can accelerate future action and is crucial for transformation and realization of sustainable development. Enabling meaningful participation of often excluded populations in the monitoring and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals would ensure that policies, programs and administrative measures address their unique needs in an effective and informed manner.

The HLPF provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen partnerships and find important pathways to move forward in the COVID-19 response and to ensure that no one is left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, without meaningful inclusion, engagement, and institutionalized participation of civil society and marginalized communities at this forum and beyond, the legitimacy of the HLPF will be questioned. The realization of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development will not happen unless root causes of structural exclusion such as patriarchy and cis-heteronormativity are addressed and tackled.

Patriarchy and cis-heteronormativity are sources of gender inequality and gender-based violence, harming women and girls, gender non-binary or gender non-conforming people, as well as men and boys. Laws that criminalize consensual same-sex behavior between adults, laws and regulations enacted to restrict the right to freedom of expression such as “propaganda laws”, laws and regulations that limit the ability of civil society organizations to legally register, laws criminalizing HIV non-disclosure, exposure, or transmission, all exclude people and form barriers in achieving inclusive and positive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To eradicate inequalities, laws and policies need to be created that promote a culture supportive of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics. Moreover, there is a need of a human rights-based approach to achieving the SDGs, one that anchors implementation in State obligations established by International Law.

Finally, there is a need for accurate and complete data collection disaggregated based on intersectional identities and experiences, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Proper data collection is one of the best ways to create the blueprint to concrete accelerated action and deliver transformation. Such data will allow for the formation of evidence-based laws and policies that serve to promote and protect all people’s rights. The data disaggregation and

collection process should include community-led organizations to ensure correct and complete data and prevent further harm from being done.

The Agenda 2030 is “an Agenda of the people, by the people and for the people,” and we urge that this principle continue to be key in accelerating progress in the decade to come.