

The Commonwealth Equality Network  
c/- The Kaleidoscope Trust  
The Print House Studio  
18 Ashwin Street  
London E8 3DL

His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma  
Marlborough House  
Pall Mall  
London  
SW1Y 5HX  
United Kingdom

Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Your Excellency,

As a network of civil society groups interested in the realisation of equal rights around the Commonwealth, we write to welcome your recent statement marking this year's International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia and to encourage you to translate your sentiments into action.

We applaud your identification of the "appalling persecution and violence" that is suffered by members of our Commonwealth communities. We wholeheartedly agree that such abuse is unacceptable, is contrary to Commonwealth values and has far-reaching effects for LGBTI people, their families, communities, economies and nations. Along with your recent commitments at the UNHRC to encourage member states to take seriously the recommendations of the upcoming UNHRC report on this issue, your IDAHOT statement helps to develop the recognition of universal rights in the Commonwealth.

As we approach the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting we are eager to ensure that this continuing discrimination is addressed in a way that plays to the Commonwealth strengths of respect, diversity and tolerance for all. We believe that the Secretariat should use its convening power in order to facilitate a dialogue between Commonwealth States on this issue in a manner that is reflective of the Commonwealth values of tolerance and respect.

In the mid-term we are eager to see the Secretariat extend its in-house expertise on LGBTI rights to the technical advice it provides to members in all related policy areas. Making this technical expertise available to interested member states would be invaluable. We believe that civil society is instrumental in providing the sort of expertise that would assist the Secretariat in developing this in-house knowledge.

We continue to believe that the Commonwealth, with its unique shared values and history, its voluntarism and its respect for difference and diversity, can become a place where the rights and dignity of all its citizens are championed and their equality protected. We look forward to working with the Commonwealth Secretariat, and all Commonwealth actors, to make this vision a reality.

Warm wishes,  
Ifeyanyi Kelly Orazulike  
Executive Director, International Center For Advocacy On Right To Health  
Chair, The Commonwealth Equality Network