

**Statement by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar  
Knut Ostby on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and  
Biphobia**

17 May 2018

Eleven UN agencies and Embassies are flying the rainbow flag today in support of diversity and inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI) in Myanmar on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

This day marks the decision of the World Health Organization to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder on 17 May 1990.

Since then, we have seen encouraging progress worldwide. Almost 40 countries now legally recognize same-sex couples. Some are looking at making it easier for transgender people to have their gender legally recognized.

However, the progress is not even. Discrimination persists in many countries on grounds of sexual orientation and LGBTI people face stigma, violence and human rights abuse.

Myanmar, like many countries in the region, has old colonial laws criminalizing same-sex relations. While these are rarely enforced, they nevertheless contribute to a hostile environment for LGBTI people.

As Myanmar transforms in so many ways, it is time to change this.

All countries have accepted the principle . enshrined in international law . that human rights are universal.

The leaders of all countries . including Myanmar . have unanimously reaffirmed their commitment ending poverty and human rights discrimination by adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 17 sustainable development goals are based on a single, guiding principle: to leave no one behind.

That includes LGBTI people who can make great contribution to society when their rights are respected.

They have a right to enjoy life that feels free, and where love can be found without prejudice and discrimination.

The United Nations is committed to support the Government of Myanmar in designing policies and programmes that will ensure human rights for all people regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

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