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**Declaration by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on  
behalf of the European Union on the occasion of the  
International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia on  
17 May 2014**

On the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, I wish to reaffirm the EU's commitment to equality and non-discrimination.

The EU is committed to the principle of the universality of human rights and reaffirms that cultural, traditional or religious values cannot be invoked to justify any form of discrimination, including discrimination against LGBTI persons. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are an unacceptable infringement of human rights.

Notwithstanding positive examples of strengthened non-discrimination measures, sexual orientation and gender identity continue to be used to justify serious human rights violations around the world. In some countries, sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex are criminalised and are liable to be punished with imprisonment or even with the death penalty. In other countries governments actively seek to limit freedom of assembly, association and expression of LGBTI persons. This is a source of concern for the EU.

**P R E S S**

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The EU's Foreign Ministers adopted the LGBTI Guidelines on 24 June 2013 and we campaign tirelessly for the respect of human rights, irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity. We raise the issue of equal rights for LGBTI persons whenever necessary in our contacts with third countries and in international fora, we speak out through public statements, and we work with our Delegations to argue the case for justice and human rights. Through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU supports LGBTI human rights defenders across the world.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland<sup>++</sup> and Serbia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

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\* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and of the European Economic Area.