



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**

**Brussels, 6 May 2010
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**Statement by
President Herman Van Rompuy
on the International Day Against Homophobia**

It was only on 17th May 1990, that the World Health Organisation finally removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Since 2004, the day has been marked as International Day Against Homophobia.

The European Union can take some pride in being at the vanguard of combating homophobia and other forms of prejudice and discrimination.

In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam enabled (and implicitly mandated) the European Union to adopt legislation to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, alongside other grounds.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights became binding on the European institutions and mandatory in the field of EU law. This Charter prohibits discrimination based on a number of grounds, specifically including sexual orientation among them.

In this respect, discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation has ceased to constitute a political cleavage, and is enshrined in the EU's founding act and statement of values. It is something that distinguishes Europe from many other parts of the world.

We are inspired by the sense for human dignity and the uniqueness of each person. everyone deserves equal chances in life.

For somebody of my generation, this consecrates a remarkable evolution of public attitudes. It represents European values at their best:

- accepting difference, not fearing it,
- living with diversity, not fleeing it,
- defending rights and responsibilities, not ignoring them.

Of course, much still needs to be done, both in Europe and other parts of the world, to ensure that these mean more than empty words. We must and shall persevere in this task.

P R E S S

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