

OPENING REMARKS – 2021 EQUAL RIGHTS COALITION CONVENING

Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, Executive Director (Kaleidoscope Trust), Civil Society Co-Chair of the Equal Rights Coalition

Minister Morton, Ambassador Tettamanti, Lord Herbert, Mr Madrigal, colleagues, friends.

My name is Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, and I am the Executive Director of Kaleidoscope Trust, one of the three civil society co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition during the mandate and under the leadership of the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom.

I am thrilled to be here with you all and to help open this long-awaited virtual convening of our Coalition.

We have all faced a particularly challenging time since the outbreak of Covid-19 early last year, and we have seen in real-time just how interconnected our world now is, and why global responses to global challenges are so important.

Thanks to the efforts of many of you in this virtual room and of others, the varied forms and instances of legal and social discrimination, persecution and violence that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people face across the globe are well-known and well-documented. LGBTI people are still criminalised in dozens of countries and jurisdictions, and we continue to be left vulnerable to crises like Covid-19 and climate change, and disproportionately bear the consequences – impacts which are intensified where our LGBTI identities intersect with other identities that are marginalised in the contexts that we live in, be it along the lines of race, ethnicity, religion or faith, socio-economic group, or migration status, among many others. We see this played out in particular for the rights of trans people, including in my own country.

Against this backdrop, the Equal Rights Coalition fills a unique and critical role in the international architecture. It is a space for connecting the dots on a thematic basis and influencing different

mechanisms within existing structures working on LGBTI rights globally. Today's convening - which has brought together representatives of ERC Member States, international institutions, and civil society from across the globe - is a critical step in rebuilding momentum behind this coalition. The commitments and conversations that will take place over the coming two days are just the first step, and it will take sustained engagement by all those present to ensure that we achieve what we are setting out to do today.

The Five-Year Strategy and Implementation Plan are the conclusion of consultations with many voices and actors from across Member States, international institutions, and civil society. The clear standards for LGBTI equality and inclusive development that they set out are guidance for us all, and will help ensure we're all moving together in the same direction.

The specific pathways we must take are what we will work together to define and take action on in the coming weeks and months and years, including in the lead-up to next June's International LGBTI Conference. The ERC's four Thematic Groups provide the space for this engagement, as well as access to dedicated, passionate people with technical and thematic expertise - and the lived experience of what the Strategy speaks to remedying. I want the representatives of our governments joining us here today to hear that civil society continues to be ready to work with you through the ERC to make this happen, and the Strategy will succeed only if you commit your resources, your time, and your minds to ensuring that it does.

We have a long way to go before LGBTI people are truly equal and safe. But the power - and the potential - represented in this virtual room gives me hope that if the commitment to coming together around the ERC table to learn from one another, to resource this work and to take specific action to deliver this Strategy is there, we can create the positive, lasting progress and change for LGBTI people both at home in our own countries and across the world that we are all so urgently seeking.

Delivered Tuesday 6 July 2021, London, UK.

Andrea Rivas, President (Asociación Familias Diversas de Argentina), Civil Society Co-Chair of the Equal Rights Coalition

Dear Ambassador and Foreign Secretary Tettamanti, Minister Morton, Lord Herbert, Independent Expert Mr. Madrigal, colleagues and friends.

My name is Andrea Rivas, President of Familias Diversas Civil Association and Co-Chair of the Argentine Civil Society.

I am very pleased to meet you, since today is a moment of opportunity to generate greater equality and commitment to our LGBTIQ+ community. The Coalition allows Member States and civil society to be united in implementing the ERC Strategy, designed with concrete actions to improve the Human Rights issues of our LGBTIQ+ community worldwide.

The context could not be more challenging; the crisis unleashed by COVID-19 aggravated the structural inequalities that our community faces on a daily basis, and it was demonstrated that the work has to be focused on the joint action of different State actors and with the participation and voice of the civil society and the communities to which the efforts are directed. We are traveling that path here.

Here lies the importance of the Coalition, where civil society from different regions of the world can have dialogue and direct communication with Member States, which gives the ERC added value when compared to other high-level forums.

Our movement, from Latin America, necessarily brings to public policies the approach from an axis of dissidence with a transfeminist consciousness. Being here means recognizing asymmetric social, economic, and institutional relationships, which are deeply inequitable. It means recognizing the diversity of our identities in the diversity of territories, of our rural, semi-rural, urban spaces, of the impact of intersectionality in our lives. Participation and direct dialogue between Member States and civil society is essential to find solutions and concrete actions to historical and structural causes of inequality.

The other day, when I had to answer the question of how in Argentina the transvestite and non-binary transvestite job quota

was achieved and the legal abortion law was sanctioned, with the incorporation of our bodies and identities in a pandemic context, the answer was: build public policies together with civil society and the synergy of political will.

We are here facing a great opportunity. For this, we have worked together on a Strategy. Now, it is necessary to continue deepening our commitment to share resources, achieve fair and representative alliances under equal conditions for different regions of the world, and get support on our path towards the autonomy of our communities in a sustainable way.

"When you fight for rights, you not only have to get the right but also generate new languages" said Lohana Berkins, and that is why it is so necessary to generate spaces for participation together with civil society, such as this Coalition. I invite you to take Lohana's words as your own and collectively move towards a more just and equal world.

Thank you very much and have an excellent day.

Originally delivered in Spanish, Tuesday 6 July 2021, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Andrea Rivas, Presidenta (Asociación Familias Diversas de Argentina), Copresidente de la Sociedad Civil de la Coalición por la Igualdad de Derechos

Estimades, Embajador y Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores Tettamanti, Ministra Morton, Lord Herbert, Experto Independiente Sr. Madrigal, colegas y amigos:

Mi nombre es Andrea Rivas, Presidenta de Familias Diversas Asociación Civil y Co Presidenta de la Sociedad Civil Argentina.

Me complace mucho encontrarme con ustedes en este momento de oportunidad para generar mayor igualdad y compromiso hacia nuestra comunidad LGBTIQ+ a nivel global. La Coalición permite a los Estados Miembros y la sociedad civil, estar unides en

implementar la estrategia diseñada con acciones y objetivos concretos para mejorar las situaciones de los Derechos Humanos de nuestra comunidad.

El contexto no podría ser más desafiante, la crisis desatada por Covid-19 agravó las desigualdades estructurales que nuestra comunidad enfrenta a diario y quedó demostrado que el trabajo tiene que estar enfocado en la acción conjunta de diferentes actores Estatales y con la participación y la voz propia de la sociedad civil y de las comunidades a las que se destinan los esfuerzos. Estamos transitando aquí ese camino.

En ello radica la importancia de la Coalición, aquí podemos dialogar y participar de manera directa las sociedades civiles de diferentes regiones del mundo con los Estados Miembros lo que le da un valor agregado a diferencia de otros foros de Alto Nivel.

Nuestro movimiento, desde Latinoamérica, trae necesariamente el abordaje de las políticas públicas desde un eje de la disidencia con una conciencia transfeminista. Estar aquí significa reconocer las relaciones asimétricas, que son profundamente inequitativas y buscar cambiarlas. Significa reconocer la diversidad de nuestras identidades en la diversidad de los territorios, de nuestros espacios rurales, semi-rurales, urbanos, del impacto de la interseccionalidad en nuestras vidas.

El otro día cuando tuve que responder a la pregunta de cómo en Argentina se logró el cupo laboral travesti trans y no binarie y se sancionó la ley de aborto legal con la incorporación de nuestros cuerpos e identidades en un contexto de pandemia, la respuesta fue: construir políticas públicas de la mano y con la sociedad civil y la sinergia de la voluntad política. Por eso la participación y el diálogo directo entre Estados Miembros y sociedad civil es indispensable para encontrar soluciones y acciones concretas a causas históricas y estructurales de desigualdad.

Estamos aquí ante una gran oportunidad. Para ello hemos trabajado en conjunto en una Estrategia. Ahora, es necesario seguir profundizando nuestro compromiso en compartir recursos, lograr alianzas justas y representativas en igualdad de condiciones para diferentes regiones del mundo y que nos apoyen en nuestro camino hacia la autonomía de nuestras comunidades de una manera sustentable.

“Cuando vos peleas por derechos, no solo tenes que conseguir el derecho sino generar nuevos lenguajes” decía Lohana Berkins, y por ello este espacio generado con la participación de la sociedad civil como prioridad nos invita a tomar las palabras de Lohana y avanzar colectivamente hacia la consolidación de la Coalición para lograr un mundo más justo e igualitario para las personas LGBTIQ+

Muchas gracias y que tengan una excelente jornada.

Originalmente pronunciado en español, el martes 6 de julio de 2021, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

CLOSING REMARKS – 2021 EQUAL RIGHTS COALITION CONVENING

Nancy Kelley, CEO (Stonewall Equality), Civil Society Co-Chair of the Equal Rights Coalition

Director Donda, Minister Morton, Lord Herbert, esteemed representatives of the many member states and intergovernmental organisations present at this convening and to my many colleagues from civil society from across the world.

It is an honour to join in this closing session as **one of the Civil Society Co-Chairs of the ERC** to mark this important milestone in the development of our global community pursuing a world without violence and a world where the rights and dignity of LGBTQI+ communities are fully respected.

In particular, we thank the **UN Independent Expert, Victor Madrigal-Borloz**, and the voice he brings on behalf of Human Rights Defenders around the world.

His many and shocking examples of how many are left at the margins of society, discriminated against, victims of violence, murdered simply because of who they are, must be a clarion call to all to move at great speed to **provide leadership, to voice support for our rights and dignity, and to resolve the many gaps in protection offered by laws and policies.**

It is alarming that we continue to live in a world that contests a **person's right to self-determination and that denies recognition of gender and a myriad of other rights.** We thank the UN Independent Expert for giving us renewed hope with his recent report and for providing a roadmap for all of us to understand and address the challenges in relation to **gender theory about which there can be no debate.** We were heartened to hear of our Member State Co-Chairs and governments around the world support for the Independent Expert's work.

His is a call that we echo to all member states of the ERC to **proactively support all LGBTQI+ communities** to ensure that they adopt a policy of no tolerance towards political leaders who stand

against us and seek to entrench the politics of exclusion and inequality.

We recognise a number of challenges that cut across all of our work to progress the rights and dignity of our communities, many of which have been amplified over recent years:

- The **pandemic** has affected our communities in particular, with many denied access to healthcare, put at risk of harm and violence, and driven further into poverty with no access to adequate housing or welfare.
- Many of us are at **increasing risk of violence, victims of hate crime and hate speech**, while our ability to survive as **LGBTQI+ rights organisations** is threatened due to a lack of resources or because of the **relentless and growing creep of the anti-gender and anti-trans movement**.
- The **lack of legal provisions to recognize gender** leads to violence, and States must establish legal gender recognition based on self-identification to protect the safety and dignity of our communities.
- The **challenge of banning all forms of conversion therapy** is shared by many of us and we recognize that there is growing solidarity to end conversion practices – once and for all time. We hope that the ERC Strategy endorsed at this convening will ensure that all Member States proud to call themselves part of the ERC will address this human rights abuse with the urgency it deserves.
- We must also together **urgently address the legacy of colonialism and decriminalisation** that many of us in civil society have been working for years to do.
- And we must work **together to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030** is vital – less than 0.04% of funding currently goes to LGBTQI+ development needs. LGBTQI+ civil society is central to the SDG dialogue, and we welcome the opportunity under the ERC for peer-to-peer engagement and further inclusion of LGBTQI+ communities in national processes. As noted by my colleague

from RFSL - there is more to a participatory process than inviting someone - power and access to influence are vital.

Today, as a coalition of Member States and civil society, we have much to be proud of as a global community coming together and agreeing a **5-year Strategy and Implementation Plan**, which looks to address many of the issues that LGBTQI+ persons and communities face.

We all know the **challenges of aligning our work together across contexts and communities**, and of agreeing on our priorities, so we consider this an achievement for all of us.

The Strategy is a new opportunity for **providing coherence and momentum for the ERC** as we **join together in common cause** to tackle the many challenges LGBTQI+ people face in every country in the world.

Many present today have been working quietly over the past year, despite working in contexts of violence, facing new threats from a growing anti-gender and anti-trans movement, struggling through the pandemic, and continuing to support our communities with a dismal lack of resources.

But despite these many competing demands, we have **crafted this Strategy** and secured the agreement needed to **now move forward together**.

We want to thank those Member States, and in particular the **Co-Chairs of Argentina and the United Kingdom**, who have over the past year consulted with their colleagues in capitals around the world to find a strategic path that we can all follow.

I hope that those Member States who have committed to the Strategy and Implementation Plan have heard our call for **sustainable funding that responds to the demands of progressing our rights and supporting our communities who so often live on the margins of societies around the world**.

We also hope that, through the ERC, Member States will **speak out and challenge political, religious and media leaders who foster homophobia, biphobia and transphobia**.

As Civil Society we are committed to ensure an **even playing field for all civil society members to participate in the ERC** and as

stated by many of our colleagues in civil society, there is a need for creating structures that foster an ethos of participation from around the world – across contexts.

We hold great promise in the ERC, as it is rare as a mechanism where civil society can sit at the same table with Member States in the spirit of resolving our many challenges. The Thematic Working Groups are an excellent example of how civil society and governments can work together.

However, there have been some challenges along the way. For this reason, we look to renew our confidence in the ERC as a vital and valuable mechanism. We want to underline the commitments we ask of Member States in the Civil Society Statement that will be shared with you as an outcome of this convening by Friday, and of which many of our concerns are reflected above in my comments.

You have heard our call for engagement, leadership, and legitimacy.

Those Member States part of the ERC need to ensure that their foreign policy intentions and leadership are supported by domestic laws and policies in keeping with the highest standards of the rights and dignity of LGBTQI+ people.

In closing I want to reflect that civil society wants to see the ERC soar and live up to its vision.

We need your leadership – we expect it – and, like many generations before us, we will continue to fight for the progress that we all deserve.

Thank you for your continued commitment to this Coalition.

Delivered Wednesday 7 July 2021, London, UK.