
Final Report: Equal Rights Coalition Conference

Buenos Aires, Argentina
8-9 September 2022

Index

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Opening Session	8
3. Plenary Sessions.....	10
3.(a) A conversation with the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI) on how to better work together to advance the ERC Strategy.....	10
3.(b) Presentation of the Pre-Conference Report	11
3.(c) Member State pledges to advance ERC goals	11
3.(d) Integrating LGBTQI+ Work Across Government: Voices from Member States and CSOs	19
3.(e) Tackling the Anti-Gender Movement: Member State Engagement Strategies ..	20
3.(f) Taking the ERC Forward: How do we Deliver on its Promise?.....	21
4. Thematic Group Sessions	23
4.(a) National Laws and Policies	23
4.(b) SDGs and the 2030 Agenda	26
4.(c) Donor Coordination	26
4.(d) International Diplomacy.....	29
5. UK Report Launch: “Ending Violence Against LGBTQI+ People – Global Evidence and Emerging Insights into What Works”	33
6. Closing session: Joint Statement and Co-Chairship Handover	35
6.(a) Adoption of Joint Statement of the ERC Global LGBTI Conference	35
6.(b) Closing comments and handing over the co-chairship to Mexico and Germany	35
Annex A: Joint Statement of the ERC Global LGBTI Conference	38

1. Executive Summary

Background and Overview

The Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) launched in Montevideo in July 2016, following on from LGBTI human rights and inclusive development conferences in Washington (2014), Berlin (2013), and Stockholm (2011). It was founded with the aim to be a multilateral coalition through which member states would cooperate closely with civil society, multilateral agencies, and other stakeholders to advance LGBTI human rights and inclusive development.

The purpose of the ERC is to promote innovative, effective diplomacy and funding and inclusive development in support of the human rights of LGBTI persons.

The majority of the ERC's work was to be accomplished through its four Thematic Groups:

1. International Diplomacy (2019-22 co-chairs: Netherlands, Outright International)
2. SDGs and 2030 Agenda (2019-22 co-chairs: Mexico, RFSL)
3. Donor Coordination (2019-22 co-chairs: USA, Synergía)
4. National Laws and Policies (2019-22 co-chairs: Canada, GATE (2019-January 2022))

Following its founding in Montevideo by the Netherlands and Uruguay, Canada and Chile assumed a two-year term as ERC co-chairs from June 2017, during which time they held a global conference, in Vancouver in August 2018. The UK and Argentina took over in June 2019 until September 2022 alongside civil society co-chairs la CHA (Argentina (2019-20)), AFDA Familias Diversas (Argentina (2020-22)), Kaleidoscope Trust (UK) and Stonewall (UK).

2021 Launch of the ERC Strategy

As ERC co-chairs, Argentina and the UK committed to develop the ERC's first Strategy and Implementation Plan, to guide and shape the ERC's work to help it meet its potential to advance LGBTI equality.

The Strategy's Five-Year Implementation Plan would set out key measurable actions that Member States would take to advance ERC goals and inform the work plans for each of the four Thematic Groups. It would build on the ERC's [2018 declaration](#) made at its Vancouver conference to advance the ERC's original purpose, notably to:

- Tackle violence and discrimination;
- Address the ongoing criminalisation of same sex conduct; and
- Effectively share best practice among ERC Member States.

The development of the Strategy and the priorities was based on consultation with civil society with input from the civil society co-chairs. After delays due to the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020/21, the [Five-Year Strategy](#) and [Implementation Plan](#) launched at a virtual Wilton Park conference on 6 and 7 July 2021.

Outcomes of the virtual launch included:

- A majority of the 42 ERC Member States responded positively to the Strategy and Five-Year Implementation Plan.
- Ministers and high-level representatives from 31 ERC Member States and organisations delivered statements, in person or by pre-recorded video during the Ministerial segment.
- ERC Member States committed to closer collaboration within the ERC, and to joining at least one of the ERC's Four Thematic Groups.
- Significant support from civil society including of the Core Group.

Civil society voices in direct dialogue with Member States proved the value of the working methods of the ERC to engage directly with each other across contexts and countries.

January 2022 Conference

On 20 January 2022, the UK and Argentina hosted a second virtual Wilton Park ERC convening six months after the launch of the ERC's Strategy and Five-Year Implementation Plan, to follow up on progress in implementation.

Objectives were:

- To improve collaboration among the ERC's membership;
- To showcase each Thematic Group's progress and activity since July; and
- To agree to closer working within the ERC.

Outcomes of the January conference were:

- Of the ERC's 42 Member States, 21 Member States attended the one-day event.
- Special Envoys, Ministers and high-level representatives delivered statements, in support of the ERC and its work.
- Increase in numbers of Member States attending Thematic Group meetings.

In June 2022, the ERC's Executive Committee agreed to conclude the UK and Argentina's extended ERC co-chair tenure by:

1. **Looking back:** Commissioning an independent report that reviewed ERC activity between June 2019 and August 2022; and
2. **Looking forwards:** Delivering a hybrid ERC conference on 8 and 9 September 2022 in Buenos Aires for virtual and in-person attendance, that considers the ERC's priorities and agrees work for the coming year in line with the Strategy and Implementation plan.

2022 Equal Rights Coalition Conference, Buenos Aires

In September 2022, Argentina and the UK hosted a hybrid ERC Conference on 8 and 9 September 2022 in Buenos Aires. On 7 September the British Embassy in Buenos Aires hosted a CSO pre-conference convening, the report for which can be found [here](#).

The objective of this biennial conference is to highlight what has been delivered during the co-chairs' tenure in relation to the Strategy, discuss topical issues related to LGBTI rights given the changing landscape for LGBTI rights and pass the baton on to the next co-chairs.

Additionally, this convening focussed on the status of the implementation of the Strategy and Implementation Plan (launched in July 2021), and Member States endorsed further actions that provide direction to advance delivery of the ERC's strategic priorities and operations.

Conference Objectives

The three conference 'streams' were:

1. Reporting on progress and setting the vision for the next two-year phase of the ERC;
2. Addressing the biggest challenges to the future of the ERC and addressing its future as a mechanism; and
3. Strategies and good practices for tackling global democratic back sliding.

Attendance

Representatives from 36 Member States and the following international institutions attended: UNFPA, World Bank, VR Transgender Network, Global Philanthropy Project, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, UN Human Rights (OHCHR), EU, UNDP, and UNAIDS. Also in attendance in-person were 64 civil society delegates, representing organisations from 36 countries plus global and regional organisations, whilst a further 33 civil society delegates attended online.

Total numbers:

- Member States: 16 in person; 19 online.
- High-Level Attendees: 33 Member States.
- Civil Society: 64 in person, 33 online.
- Total: 308 participants.

Member States:

- Argentina: Santiago Cafiero, - Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Alba Rueda, Special Representative on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.
- Australia: Mai Linh, Assistant Director – Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Austria: Ulrike Butschek, Director of Human Rights of the Ministry of European and International Affairs.
- Belgium: Ms. Hadja Lahbib, Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions.
- Canada: Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- Chile: Tomas Pascual, Director of Human Rights of Foreign Affairs.
- Costa Rica: Ricardo Sossa Ortiz, Presidential Commissioner for Social Inclusion
- Cyprus: Ioannis Koukoularides, Director of Americas Departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Denmark: Jens-Christian Overgaard Skow, Director of Human Rights of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Ecuador: Alexander Guano Monteros, Under Secretary of Diversity.
- Estonia: Minna-Liina Lind, Ambassador at Large for Human Rights at the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Finland: Janina Jasenson, HR Director.
- France: Delphine Borione, Ambassador at large for Human Rights.
- Germany: Annalena Baerbock – Minister of Foreign Affairs Ministry.
- Greece: Panos Alexandris, Secretary General for Justice and Human Rights.
- Honduras: Mirta Claudina Gutierrez Reyez, Under Secretary of Human Rights.
- Ireland: Gerard McCoy, Ambassador of Ireland in Argentina.
- Italy: Benedetto Della Vedova, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Fabrizio Petri, Especial Envoy for the rights of LGBTQI+ people.
- Luxembourg: M. Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Malta: Gabriela Calleja, Head SOGIGESC Unit.
- Mexico: Omar Baquero, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Netherlands: Bahia Tahzib-Lie, Ambassador for Human Rights.
- New Zealand: Louisa Wall, Ambassador for Equality Gender for the Pacific.
- North Macedonia: Elena Zdravkovska, Counsellor for Human Rights.
- Norway: Ms Bjorg Sandkjaer, State Secretary.
- Serbia: Gordana Comic, Minister for Human, Minority Rights, and Social Dialogue.
- Slovenia: Kristina Radej, Head of Human Rights Department.
- Spain: Maria Jesús Alonso, Ambassador of Spain in Argentina.
- Sweden: Ambassador Ms Elinor Hammarskjold, Director General for Political Affairs.
- Switzerland: Charge affairs, Embassy of Switzerland in Argentina
- United Kingdom: Lord Nick Herbert, Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights.

- United States of America: Jessica Stern, Special Envoy to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.
- Uruguay: Carlos Enciso, Ambassador of Uruguay in Argentina.

The conference was also attended by the following observer states: Colombia, Peru, South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam.

Summary of Conference Outcomes

1. The Buenos Aires Conference oversaw the development of a [Conference Declaration](#), linked to the Five-Year Strategy and endorsed by ERC member states with input from civil society and international organisations.
2. On 7 September the British Embassy in Buenos Aires hosted a pre-conference meeting for all CSOs participating in the two-day conference. The meeting report is [here](#).
3. On 8 September the British Embassy in Buenos Aires hosted a regional meeting of the Global Equality Caucus for regional parliamentarians and legislators, which included representation from six surrounding countries.

Related Documents

All documents are also available on the Equal Rights Coalition website.

- [Five-Year Strategy](#)
- [Implementation Plan](#)
- [Pre-conference report](#)
- [Anti-gender background paper](#)
- [Conference Declaration](#)
- [What Works report](#): “Ending Violence against LGBTQI+ People”

2. Opening Session

The conference was officially opened by representatives of the Member State Co-Chairs:

1. Alba Rueda, Special Representative SOGI, Argentina's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship.
2. Lord Nick Herbert, UK Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights.
3. Santiago Cafiero, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship.

Key points from their speeches are below.

Alba Rueda, Special Representative SOGI, Argentina's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship

- The construction of direct and respectful dialogues with those countries that still have position that criminalize sexual orientations in order to challenge the heterosexual order.
- It is important to install both in multilateral and bilateral environments the relevance of harming each other so that LGBTQI+ children can grow and develop freely, without suffering from physical, sexual, psychological violence or degrading treatment in any area of social life, including the fight for the end of pathologizing practices that are often reproduced in medical and health services.

Lord Herbert, UK Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights

- Delighted to be here alongside my Argentinian colleagues as we conclude our three-year tenure as co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition. Strongly repudiate the recent attempted assassination of the Vice President. Democracy will always prevail over violence.
- The UK government firmly believes that every person should have a fair opportunity in life, no matter who or where they are. LGBT+ people are not asking for "special or additional rights", just to be afforded the same rights as everyone else.
- UK delighted to have worked in partnership with Argentina in this role for just over three years.
- Our two-day event is a forward look at the key issues facing LGBTI equality, what needs to be done and how the ERC plans to respond to those challenges. We will draw on an excellent pre-conference report, which explores all that we have achieved so far. The two-day event will focus on how to build upon our achievements, so far, and agree next steps.
- The launch of the ERC's first Strategy at our mini conference in July last year was a significant milestone in the ERC's history. The Strategy sought to guide and shape the ERC's work; to ensure it delivers on the ERC's original promise: to tackle

violence and discrimination; the ongoing criminalisation of same sex conduct; and to share best practice among its membership.

- Since the launch of the Strategy, we have a greater sense of collaboration and understanding, putting us on track to become a formidable coalition to end the hate crimes, the violence, the discrimination and the unacceptable criminalisation of LGBTI people, for good.
- But as we know, the new Strategy will only be successful over the next five years if we all commit to implement it; if we all commit to be take a more active role as ERC member states. Let us use our days together to strengthen and productively build on the Strategy.

Santiago Cafiero, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship

- It should be noted that the Argentine State has been able to attend to many of the claims of social movements and translate them into a regulatory framework.
- The ERC Coalition gives us the opportunity to take into account the knowledge, political, practices and trajectories of each region of the world. We are committed to the construction of more diverse, fair and equality spaces and strategies.

3. Plenary Sessions

3.(a) A conversation with the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI) on how to better work together to advance the ERC Strategy

This session focussed on a review of the IE SOGI mandate, a look at approaches to tackling human rights violations, and how the ERC can increase its cooperation with the IE SOGI mandate to identify opportunities to advance decriminalisation efforts.

Moderator: Cecilia Meirovich, Human Rights Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina.

Speaker: Victor Madrigal-Borloz, IE SOGI

Key points of the discussion are below.

Victor Madrigal-Borloz, UN IE-SOGI

- The ERC is more important than ever, and the increasing roll back of human rights in many countries is enough to make that point.
- Coalitions such as the ERC have an important role to play in addressing these challenges. A dynamic ERC will help to address some of these challenges, supporting efforts for legislative protections/measures to address discrimination.
- Coalitions will play an important role in addressing criminalisation, ensuring local CSOs are the helm in responding to opportunities to reporting their work back.

Renewal of the IE-SOGI mandate:

- For the past six years the mandate has been effective as a driver for LGBTI equality, seeking to address violence and discrimination by:
 - Assessing implementation of human rights standards;
 - Identifying best practices and gaps;
 - Raising awareness of these issues;
 - Identifying and addressing the root causes of violence and discrimination;
 - Engaging in dialogue;
 - Offering support and technical advice to combat violence.
- The mandate now needs to include the effects of climate change.
- Strong response from States to mandate renewal but they know that there is little we can do in practice while medieval laws that no longer apply in the modern world, continue to exist.
- The process for identifying the next IE-SOGI must be transparent with a diverse range of applicants.

3.(b) Presentation of the Pre-Conference Report

Civil Society co-chairs presented the [Pre-Conference Report](#), which had been shared before the conference. The report which was based on extensive consultation and a questionnaire developed by the ERC Member State and civil society co-chairs as a measure of their own accountability. It covered the achievements, challenges and lessons learned over the three years of the UK and Argentina's mandate and recommendations/call to action for next steps to strengthen the Coalition. Its independent drafter, Joseph O'Connell, presented the pre-conference report.

Speakers:

1. Andre Rivas, President of AFDA Familias Diversas
2. Nancy Kelley, Chief Executive, Stonewall
3. Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, Executive Director, Kaleidoscope Trust

Key points:

1. ERC Member States engagement was key – across levels and departments of government so that the relevant decision-makers were engaged.
2. There remained a Global North-Global South divide.
3. Issues affecting intersex people were not adequately included.
4. More ERC wide communications (with interpretation) were required to ensure participation of a wider range of stakeholders.
5. There was a lack of clarity around ERC roles.

Recommendations:

- Continue with the creation of an Administrative Unit, including a communications and translation function.
- Increase ERC Member States' engagement in Thematic Groups and with the Strategy.
- Engagement with ERC MS needs substantive commitment across government.
- Look to address barriers to Global South and East CSO resourcing challenges that would enable their participation.
- Take up a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy to improve accountability and learning. To this end, a draft was developed in advance of the conference for the use of the incoming co-chairs.

3.(c) Member State pledges to advance ERC goals

This session, chaired by Lord Herbert, the UK's Special Envoy on LGBT+ rights, provided an opportunity for all ERC Member States, through their high-level representatives, to reaffirm their commitment to the Coalition, to the ERC Strategy and Implementation Plan, and to publicly state their endorsement of and commitment to the recommended actions identified for the next two years in the Pre-Conference Report.

Argentina: Pledged to join the International Diplomacy Thematic Group, and to demonstrate a consolidated strong foreign policy regarding LGBT rights through representative of gender identity and MFA directorate. They also sought to ensure that their embassies and consulates around the world would be a safe space for LGBT+ people. This would include work to promote direct participation of civil society and foster the role of special envoys regarding gender identity.

Australia: Strongly supported the work of the ERC. Like-minded states needed to strengthen collective advocacy to protect gains and make progress. Important to recognise intersectionality; will continue to have open and genuine dialogue as well as a focus on the experiences of first Australians.

Work would focus on 3 areas: decriminalisation (especially where the death penalty existed); social capacity building and other work in the South Pacific; and increased engagement with civil society and activists to strengthen the evidence base for Australia. Australia would also host a human rights conference as part of Sydney World Pride next year.

Austria: Noted that the Vienna declaration enshrined principle of human rights and thanked the co-chairs for their tireless efforts. It would take persistent efforts to make the progress, which is why Austria would continue to support the ERC's work, advocate for LGBT rights, foster the mandate and work of independent expert, and raise public awareness about LGBT rights. Austria would also assure the incoming co-chairs of full support and trusted that the ERC will continue help to advance rights.

Belgium: Stressed that progress had been made, but aggression and discrimination still exist, while LGBT advancement had stagnated or regressed in many places. ERC must achieve concrete progress. Belgium committed to making a meaningful contribution and on 17 May had adopted new Action Plan. This would step up the fight against discrimination and increase security while maximising inclusivity and countering hate speech and hate crimes. There was also a key international dimension, which would help to play a leading role in decriminalisation efforts. Belgium fully subscribed to EU policy and action plan. The role of civil society was crucial, especially in raising awareness about diversity.

Canada: Congratulated the UK and Argentina for their role as co-chairs. They noted that the world was changing, but more slowly than we wanted. Canada believed that the ERC can make a difference, and would stand with its efforts. They pledged to work to ensure that nobody had their rights abused on the basis of sexual identity, orientation or defined characteristics. They also pledged to continue to contribute to the work of the institution, noting that the more engaged a Member State was, the happier they were with the work of the organisation.

Canada pledged to work with other Thematic Groups (not just National Laws and Policies) and would serve on the Executive and Coordination Committees. They would continue to work with the Global South to ensure better representation, including financial support; and would provide funding to additional developing countries, including \$9m for marginalised communities in the Global South.

PM Trudeau announced at Ottawa Pride an LGBTQI+ strategy, after broad consultation, this would provide for a whole of government approach. Finally, they thanked all Member States and encouraged them to enjoy the good work of the ERC. Canada pledged its full support to the new co-chairs Germany and Mexico.

Chile: Had achieved integral protections of LGBT community including on same-sex marriage, and other legal measures. The Government of Chile had a feminist foreign policy, and will change anti-discrimination law to protect HR defenders, as well as banning corrective surgery on intersex new-borns. Chile agreed to a legal approach on education and protection of trans students. Chile was a Human Rights council candidate and would work to progress the UPR framework as well as taking steps towards special envoy status.

Costa Rica: Thanked the UK and Argentina as co-chairs and reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion and protection of LGBT rights and the ERC. Noted the legal accomplishment made in changes to the criminal code, which increased jail sentence for conviction of these crimes. Costa Rica also remained committed to diplomatic efforts. Education and training would be given to all government officials to help promote and deliver policies, and work against conversation therapy will be ongoing.

Ecuador: Had three lines of work, aligned with the ERC: working to eradicate discrimination, with a Diversity action plan to be executed by 2025 (built in a participatory way on guidance from ERC); preventing violence based on gender identify, orientation (with training for target populations) and economic empowerment for LBGT community (including to train and strengthen technical abilities of community, with seed capital to implement what they have learned); and data – LGBT populations were hidden, trying to increase data base by conducting a census for people deprived of freedom.

Finland: Finland was a founding member of the ERC. Our commitment remains to promote and fully protect all LGBTIQ+ persons and their rights globally remains firm. The need for our joint efforts is stronger than ever. The Covid pandemic, continuing conflicts and brutal attacks on civilian population in many regions – including in Europe – has had a devastating impact to many LGBTIQ+ persons. Concerned about the situation of all Ukrainian civilians, including LGBTIQ+ persons that are under attack after Russia's brutal invasion. Many of them had been forced to flee the country and were refugees. In Russia – where the LGBTIQ community had been living in fear already for years – the situation was rapidly worsening. Also in many other countries, LGBTIQ+ persons were persecuted

and not able to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This was not acceptable.

As a member of the ERC and the UN Human Rights Council in 2022-2024, Finland was doing its utmost to address these situations. We were committed to continue visible political support and substantial funding for LGBTIQ rights defenders and the global, regional and local LGBTIQ+ communities, who were true heroes and the real actors of change.

France: France warmly thanked Argentina and the UK for organizing the conference, which demonstrates collective commitment to protecting the rights of LGBT+ people. Also welcomed the strong mobilisation of civil society organisations, which were an integral part of the Coalition. Only together can we achieve concrete results and greater recognition of the rights of LGBT+ persons on the international stage. Welcomed the contribution of the ERC, which has been working for more than six years in this direction.

France prioritised fighting all forms of discrimination and defending the rights of LGBT+ persons. Amongst the latest advances, France recently adopted a law banning so-called 'Conversion Therapies', and access to medically assisted reproduction had been opened to female couples and single women.

This commitment continued on the international stage. That is why on August 4, 2022, the Prime Minister announced the creation of an Ambassador for LGBT+ rights. Once appointed, this person would be fully involved in the work of the ERC and would actively participate in its working groups. The Ambassador would maintain a regular dialogue with civil society partners and facilitate coordination between partners prior to major multilateral events, providing an opportunity to raise this issue. France welcomed the commitment of Germany and Mexico. The challenges before us were huge.

Germany: Noted that they were taking over co-chairmanship with Mexico and were implementing a National Action Plan to advance non-discrimination including in schools and workplaces. Legislation was being updated to change gender on official documents without doctor's approval. Germany planned to scale up its international efforts as part of its feminist foreign policy. Germany was fully committed to ERC Strategy and would commit 800,000 euros for the ERC Secretariat and to support wider work.

Greece: Delighted to be at the ERC Conference, thanked Argentina for hosting this very important event. Argentina together with the UK, as ERC co-chairs, have demonstrated commendable commitment and leadership in coordinating the implementation of the Coalition's Strategic Plan and goals. Congratulated both on their excellent work.

Grounded on the principled position that human rights are universal and indivisible and that discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics, should be prohibited, Greece was already

implementing its first National Strategy on LGBTQI+ Equality, which was in line with the ERC Strategic Plan. A diverse Committee comprising of esteemed members of the academia, civil society organizations and government representatives drafted the strategy. The National Strategy, the drafting of which I was personally involved, attached high priority to eliminating violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals as well as enhancing their protection both at home and abroad.

To this end, Greece was constantly improving its domestic legal and institutional framework. The most recent examples included the explicit legal prohibition of conversion therapies as well as the promotion of access of transgender persons to the public unemployment programme. At the same time, our embassies are implementing specific instructions on the protection and safety of LGBTQI+ individuals abroad, issued by the MFA.

Honduras: Honduras noted that the ERC pulled together important stakeholders from across the world. Honduras promoted an agenda of unlimited respect for human rights and was committed to the protection and safeguarding of LGBT persons. As such, they had started to fulfil the resolutions of inter-American court case on the murder, which happened during the 2019 Covid-19 curfew, and acknowledged the state's responsibility for this. Honduras was working on the adoption of a gender identity protocol for identification purposes and would fulfil all recommendations of the international system, with a specific focus on follow up and implementation. Delivery of training for public officials and military police to prevent Human Rights violations was also a priority. Policies were in place to focus on human dignity and the right to sexual diversity, as well as training public officials to develop skills and promote respects for equal rights.

Iceland: Thanked the co-chairs from the UK and Argentina for hosting the conference. Iceland supported the ERC and remained strongly committed to the promotion and protection of LGBTI rights. Iceland continued to make conscious improvements with recent legislative reforms on gender autonomy and equal treatment in the labour market. Also, a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation bill was adopted recently to ensure equal treatment in all areas of society, irrespective of, *inter alia*, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex characteristics.

Iceland's first Action Plan on LGBTI rights was also adopted in the summer. Abroad, human rights remained a cornerstone of Iceland's foreign policy and international development cooperation. This work was a key priority for Iceland during our term in the Human Rights Council and remained a priority during the upcoming chairmanship in the Council of Europe.

The ERC had an important role to play in bringing together Governments and Civil Society Organizations to jointly demonstrate our collective action in combatting violence and discrimination, advancing inclusion and diversity, and sharing experiences. Iceland was dedicated to implementing the Strategy.

Italy: Highlighted that while some progress had been made, LGBT persons still endured criminalisation and discrimination around the world. In order to achieve full implementation of UN development goals, the goals of the IE-SOGI were key, which Italy steadfastly supported. Italy fully supported the mandate and work of the UN independent expert and would work to foster positive developments. Diplomatic efforts to encourage decriminalisation and tackling violence and discrimination were a key part of work going forward. Italy believed that the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council is a necessary tool to foster developments in this field. At the national level, since 2020, dedicated centres to prevent and fight against discrimination based on SOGI had been established throughout Italy, providing assistance to victims. A broad national consultation involving civil society associations and public Administrations had been launched with a view to draft a National Multiannual Strategy for the promotion of the rights of LGBTI persons.

Italy also appointed in November last year Italy's first Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ persons in the world, whose mandate also included promoting the wider decriminalisation of homosexuality worldwide.

Luxembourg: The mandate of the Independent Expert was crucial and Luxembourg fully supported the role. Even in Europe, despite considerable positive developments there were gaps in basic protection against discrimination and violence. Inequalities were exacerbated due to crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic and violent conflicts. Essential for Luxembourg to prioritise gender equality and the fight against all forms of discrimination as a member of the UN Human Rights Council. Specifically, they have committed to fight against the undermining of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of LGBTI persons and to pursue legislation to protect the right to physical integrity and self-determination of intersex children. All being done in the framework of a broader National Action plan to promote the rights of LGBTI persons, launched in 2018 in close collaboration with civil society actors. The ERC provided a unique platform for governments and civil society to work towards a common goal: ensuring inclusive development for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics. Luxembourg was particularly pleased to see the focus on combating anti-gender movements in Europe and beyond. Looking back, the ERC had succeeded in highlighting some of the most pressing issues facing the LGBTI community today. Thanked Argentina and the UK for their impressive commitment in this regard, welcoming Germany and Mexico.

Mexico: Commended Argentina on the organisation of the ERC conference, noting that it was the only forum in which states/civil society and others got together to share expertise and best practice in defending LGBT rights. Increasing membership of states and civil society, especially from the Global South, would be a priority for Mexico as co-chair. Mexico had a progressive foreign policy and would do all it could to promote the

agenda, and called for the support of all members to Germany and Mexico as they took on the role of chair.

Netherlands: Expressed thanks to Argentina for hosting the conference and to the UK and Argentina for their inspiring leadership. The world was heading into challenging times and seeing the contemporary Human Rights structures under pressure amid declining support worldwide. Courageous activists were bearing the brunt, and only through strategic and coordinated cooperation can we tackle this. That is why the 42 countries and all the organisations working together in ERC were so important. There was much to be learned from civil society and experts. The Netherlands was committed to maximising existing membership, incorporating views of civil society and implementing the recommendations put forward by the report. They would continue to contribute financially including to the establishment of the Secretariat.

New Zealand: Thanked co-chairs UK and Argentina. New Zealand strongly supported equal rights for people, including through funding for equal rights LGBT work across the South Pacific, highlighted by the presence of a representative from Fiji. It was important to actively seek out the communities around the world and identify ways to support them. We needed to be equal citizens and equal human beings. They acknowledged the strong leadership on these issues represented at the conference.

Norway: Remembered the Pride attacks in Oslo, which saw two deaths and highlighted the need for this work in all countries, including those in the Global North. Work was ongoing to update legislation on conversation therapy and the need to address criminality where it remained. Norway would implement an action plan on LGBT with a focus on minorities, closed religious communities and trans/non-binary people. They emphasised the need for dialogue with and support for wider civil society groups, for which the ERC was key. They would continue to engage actively with diplomacy working groups and will support new co-chairs.

Peru (Observer state): Peru thanked the Member States and the co-chairs of Argentina and the UK for the opportunity to attend as observers. This was of importance as Peru considered joining the ERC. For a number of months Peru had participated in the OAS Core Group for LGBTIQ rights. Peru was preparing for the OAS General Assembly in Lima, which was to be dedicated to the theme “together against inequality and discrimination”.

Last June the permanent representation of Peru to the OAS organised an event called “Breaking down prejudices: Rights of LGBTI+ persons in the Americas”, which sought to initiate dialogue between Member States and CSOs with concrete proposals and actions to advance the rights of LGBTI persons. Peru was committed to the promotion and effective fulfilment of the rights of all of its citizens.

Serbia: Noted that in the history of human rights there was always somebody left behind. LGBT people were still being left behind. Serbia was focussed on introducing instruments on how to implement a ‘leave no one behind’ policy across government. ERC and local civil society activists combined with UN/EU and government work helped to squeeze space for hatred and ensure social justice. President of Serbia had committed to Euro Pride, although some plans would not be able to take place due to security concerns. Recognised that there was more to be done and expressed gratitude to have ERC on their side; noted there was lots to lose if we lose the momentum.

Sweden: Stressed that all states had the same responsibility to respect and protect these rights and that dialogue and partnerships with civil society was paramount. Swedish development aid would target flexible forms of funding (one of largest in the world) and encouraged others to invest in LGBT networks and communities to ensure that they reach those most in need. It was important to address the administrative obstacles to reaching out, and the ERC was key for this. No country could afford to be complacent, which is why Sweden was implementing a national long-term strategy with 3-year action plan, which would see improved legal gender recognition as well as looking at updates for conversion therapy protections.

UK: Although will be stepping down as co-chair, the UK remained committed and will continue to play an active role in all fora of ERC, including tangible action and contributing to the establishment of Secretariat. Domestically the UK would focus on hate crime, reformative legislation and improving healthcare and IV treatment for same sex female couples. In the international sphere, the UK would work with local grassroots human rights defenders, continue to provide diplomatic and financial support to repeal outdated legislation and would increase efforts to tackle violence, stigma and discrimination – especially in crisis situations. The UK would fight against any rollback on equality rights and a UK funded evidence report on what works to end violence against LGBTI+ people would be issued today.

USA: Highlighted the importance of evaluating the impact and engagement with civil society, and pledged to listen to civil society. The pledges the USA made were a reflection of consultation across US Government:

1. Combat conversion therapy practices,
2. Mainstream attention to LGBT issues in human rights and humanitarian – hold ourselves and partners accountable for including vulnerable communities.
3. Increase funding for LGBT, e.g. GEF and other partnerships, listen to activists on front lines to ensure effective philanthropy, US AID will launch new incentive fund.
4. Work with embassies on de-criminalisation efforts and encouraging coordinated diplomatic engagement.
5. Elevate efforts to make development inclusive including with CSO partners.
6. US AID coordinate with partners to focus on labour rights and economic empowerment.
7. Banning discrimination in contracts on foreign assistance.

8. Accountability mechanism to enhance implementation of non-discrimination.
9. Sectoral specific guidance.

Uruguay: Thanked all present for their commitment to the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. Reaffirmed commitment to eradicate discrimination and violence based on SOGI. Uruguay had strong regulations and policies in this area, but recognised that it is important to continue to make progress. Commitments for this were: to promote best practices so our embassies and consulates across the world would have effective tools to provide security to the LGBTIQ+ population; to continue to integrate civil society into different spaces, to give a platform to their concerns; to share information and resources with members of the Coalition; and to make visible the real situations of LGBTIQ+ communities, with the aim to eradicate violence against and criminalisation of LGBTIQ+ people in Uruguay and around the world

To fulfil the ERC's objectives it was necessary to strengthen this space, and with it strengthen democracy in our countries. There was no democracy without rights, and there were no rights without equality. Grateful for the opportunity this space provided, and wished everyone the greatest success in the implementation of the strategy and work plan. Categorically reaffirmed the commitment of the Uruguayan state.

3.(d) Integrating LGBTIQ+ Work Across Government: Voices from Member States and CSOs

The discussion focussed on what ERC MS can do to better advance LGBTI+ rights coherently across all departments and according to the ERC's strategy and implementation plans. Government representatives reflected on approaches that work and CSOs shared their views/suggestions on the matter and in particular on how these mechanisms can work best.

Moderator: Miguel Mesquita, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

Speakers:

1. Fabrizio Petri, Italy's Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBTIQ+ Persons
2. Jessica Stern, U.S. Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTIQ+ Persons
3. Louisa Wall, Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific), New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Key points/recommendations:

1. Changes to national laws are not co-ordinated within government or by diplomatic pressure but by external petitions, made by those outside of government.
2. The new births, deaths, marriage and relationship Bill in New Zealand means that on intersex issues it is now the parents and clinicians that decide on identity.

3. Trans inclusion in sport is now a global issue. Sport has become the catalyst for the anti-gender movement.
4. Italy passed same-sex civil union legislation in 2016. Over the past seven years, the Italian people see this as sensible and now work to actively address discrimination. The people help to drive change.
5. Governments need domestic and international LGBTI rights strategies to guide and shape their work.
6. Countries can effectively broker dialogue with others in the region.
7. Countries must make programme funding more accessible, increase money flows and allocations.
8. Governments need to ensure that their staff are trained on equality issues.

3.(e) Tackling the Anti-Gender Movement: Member State Engagement Strategies

The discussion covered the findings of the [Background Paper](#) that was commissioned by the ERC civil society co-chairs concerned that there be an accessible source of information on the anti-gender movement. It explored the movement and its tactics with a discussion about how ERC Member States can respond.

Moderators:

1. Ambassador Alba Rueda, Argentina's Special Representative on SOGI
2. Julia Ehrt, Executive Director, ILGA World

Speakers:

1. *Presentation of the background paper:* Magister Andre Rivas, President of AFDA Familias Diversas and Dr. Claire House (virtual), author of the background paper
2. Professor Sonia Correa, ABIA
3. Nancy Kelley, CEO, Stonewall
4. Sussel Paredes, Legislator from Peru
5. Yuri de Boer, Representative from the Netherlands

Key points from the report:

States, donors and CSOs are all actors in countering the anti-gender movement. It is a set of social movements, sometimes with a shared strategy that is deployed across contexts and countries, and a political process that frames progressive politics as a dangerous ideology. Observations about the anti-gender movement include:

1. It looks different in different contexts and works on many levels.
2. The anti-gender movement focusses on contentious issues.
3. They are a fluid movement, tying in with other right-wing, anti-democratic movement and faith-based organisations.
4. They are well organised and funded in the range of billions of USD.

5. They target progress on human rights issues and attempt to disrupt solidarity across liberation movements.
6. They work to update their public appeal (e.g., they use science and “facts”) and use attacks on trans people especially for this.
7. They seek to shrink the space for civil society action based on aggressive actions to limit the space for civil society actors to operate through wrecking media and litigation approaches.

Recommendations:

1. Leadership in response is required across governments.
2. CSOs need funding to match the vast resources of the anti-gender movement.
3. We must all work together across country contexts mindful of how the anti-gender movement expresses itself variously.
4. Build a knowledge base: who are the actors, etc.?
5. Work in the multilateral system to agree a text.
6. Engage a cross section of civil society including youth.
7. Ground the conversation in facts rather than speaking in abstracts.

A number of Member States expressed their interest in having more detailed conversations about the information in the paper, and were pleased to see the anti-gender movement so clearly explained.

3.(f) Taking the ERC Forward: How do we Deliver on its Promise?

A discussion about the ERC as an international organisation and how the ERC can strengthen and effectively advance the Strategy’s Implementation Plan. The discussion covered resourcing, planning, the need for Global South inclusion and inclusion across identities, accountability to the Implementation Plan, and plans for the creation of an Administrative Unit.

Moderator: Diana Dalton, Deputy Director of Education, Gender and Equalities Department, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Speakers:

1. Cecilia Meirovich, Human Rights Director, Argentina’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship.
2. Andre Rivas, President, AFDA Asociación Familias Diversas de Argentina
3. Klaus Jetz, Executive Director, Lesben und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (LSVD)
4. Omar Baqueiro, Coordinator of the Civil Society Liaison Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico

5. Boyan Konstantinov, Policy Specialist, Key Populations, LGBTI Rights and Inclusive Development, HIV, Health and Development Practice – BPPS/GPN, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (virtual)

Key points/recommendations:

1. Effective monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan is key.
2. Invite domestic-facing government officials to the National Laws and Policies Thematic Group.
3. The ERC should work with regional integration systems.
4. The ERC co-chairs should issue more joint statements.
5. The ERC could set an aspirational goal for LGBTI aid funding.
6. On new members, the question is on quantity versus quality. It is important to seek deeper engagement of Member States against widening membership.
7. Work more closely with UN agencies and external organisations.
8. The ERC is now ready for the creation of an Administrative Unit.

4. Thematic Group Sessions

4.(a) National Laws and Policies

The Equal Rights Coalition and National Laws Policies: The role the ERC can play in coordinating efforts of states to promote national laws and policies to protect persons based on SOGIESC.

Moderator: Jean Freedberg, Human Rights Campaign

Speakers:

1. Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Canada.
2. Julie Dorf, Council for Global Equality
3. Tamara Adrián, Deputy Chair, Global Equality Caucus.
4. Camilo Godoy Pena, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chile
5. Nathalie Levman, Department of Justice, Canada (Virtual)
6. Greta Pena, Undersecretary of Diversity Policies of Argentina's Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity

Session objective: To focus on the role the ERC can play in coordinating efforts of states to promote national laws and policies to protect persons based on SOGIESC.

Session Summary:

National Laws and Policies Thematic Group: Canadian Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Rob Oliphant, delivered introductory remarks noting that national laws and policies can make a real difference and are vital to protecting and improving the lives of 2SLGBTQI+ persons. He noted that he has witnessed progression of laws and policies – decriminalisation, equal rights for marriage, adoption, increase to legislation on human rights including trans rights, and most recently practices on so-called conversion therapy, and that this Thematic Group is important because we have seen the effect and changes of these laws. He stressed the importance of having legislators more engaged in the in ERC, and especially this Thematic Group. Canada has co-chaired the National Laws and Policies Thematic Group since 2020. It was noted that this group meets every month to share lessons learned and best practices on legislation and policies related to LGBTI rights. Although the CSO co-chair position for this group has been vacant, the group enjoys active CSO participation. The group made achievements in information sharing, by hosting two webinars: one focused on legal gender recognition, led by GATE and the OHCHR (3 December 2021) and a second on LGBTI Refugees led by Rainbow Railroad and Canada (8 April 2022). The National Laws and Policies Thematic Group also developed a comprehensive white paper on legal gender recognition to accompany the first webinar. However, one civil society member expressed that webinars alone were

insufficient and reiterated the importance of exploring new pathways to advancing inclusive laws and policies. It was also noted that the Thematic Group should address ERC Member States who adopt regressive policies.

Tracking Progress on inclusive legislation and policies: Julie Dorf from the Council from Global Equality presented on how [ERC member states perform in terms of inclusive legislation and policies](#). In collaboration with [F&M Global Barometers](#), the Council for Global Equality scored the ERC's Member States individually based on their own domestic legal frameworks and the protections afforded to their own LGBTQI residents. These scorecards are 111 states that the US has invited to the summit of democracy. The report cards used 30 criteria of laws and policies that states can change. Countries were graded based on three criteria: basic human rights; protection from violence; and socio-economic rights. The majority of countries received a failing report card in 2020, showing significant gaps in protection at the domestic level. Out of 42 countries only two have excellent score cards (Canada and Malta), and only Malta has a perfect score. Intersex rights were shown to be among the least protected. The participating countries in the ERC's mean score is 67%. New report cards with 2022 data will be out in December before next Summit for Democracy and will include a new perception index. There was a question from the floor whether the report is in multiple languages – it is not currently.

Promoting coordinated action among legislators to support equal rights and non-discrimination for LGBTI persons: Tamara Adrian of the Venezuelan National Assembly presented on the role of legislators and cooperation among them in supporting equal rights and non-discrimination for 2SLGBTQI+ persons. She noted that 1/3 of the world still criminalizes same sex intimacy. Tamara noted that law is an important tool of change, but it must be accompanied by a well-recognized civil society with strong alliances, including alliances with legislators. The Global Equality Caucus, of which Tamara is Deputy Chair, was highlighted as an example of alliance building for advancing the rights of LGBTI persons. In partnership with NGOs, the Global Equality Caucus works with parliamentarians, legislators, and elected officials at national, regional or local level to advocate for equality for LGBTI people. She noted that individuals are instruments of change – if we can understand ourselves of tools of change, we can strengthen our alliances and respect our differences.

Best practices in national laws and policies:

Human Rights of Intersex Persons in Chile. Camilo Godoy Pena, from the Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke about the evolution of human rights of intersex persons in Chile – the rights of intersex persons being the least respected. In 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez called on all States to repeal any law allowing intrusive and irreversible treatments, when enforced or administered without the free and informed consent of the person concerned. Chile's Ministry of Health published a circular in 2015 instructing the national health sector to stop the “normalization” of surgical interventions for intersex infants and children. This was met with resistance from the

medical community. However, continued advocacy led to advances. On December 27, 2019, Chile's Gender Identity Law -- Ley de Identidad de Género – which provides legal protections for gender identity recognition, went into effect. Chile in 2022 created policy that prohibited adverse medical procedures for Intersex persons it was argued that the human rights of intersex people have not been adequately addressed in framework of ERC. Mexico and Germany were encouraged to urgently address this gap during their tenure as co-chairs.

Canada's experience in banning adverse "conversion" practices. Nathalie Levman from Canada's Department of Justice shared the country's experience in developing Bill C-4, which criminalizes so-called "conversion therapy" practices, including for consenting adults. The law, adopted on January 7, 2022, denounces the harm of conversion therapy, and is among the most comprehensive legal frameworks in the world. The Criminal Code of Canada now prohibits causing another person to undergo conversion therapy, removing a minor from Canada for conversion therapy, receiving a benefit from conversion therapy, and advertising conversion therapy. For the law to apply, the behaviour must be practice, treatment or service (some sort of formalized intervention) and must require a heteronormative or cisgender result. Interventions that relate to the exploration of an individual identity are not unless it considers cisgender or heterosexual identities normative. They established the following as indictable offenses:

- Knowingly causing another person to undergo conversion therapy or providing such therapy, which is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.
- Knowingly promoting or advertising conversion therapy, which is punishable by up to two years' imprisonment
- Receiving a financial or other material benefit, knowing that it is obtained or derived directly or indirectly from the provision of conversion therapy, which is punishable by up to two years' imprisonment.

Argentina's Law on transgender protections. Finally, Greta Pena from Argentina's Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity spoke about Argentina's law on transgender protection – a law reserving 1% of Argentina's public sector jobs for transgender people. It was noted that the Argentine government has created a voluntary registry of Trans persons who are willing to fill public sector positions. Because of these changes, 500 Trans persons have a job and 6,000 have been included in the new registry. Addressing livelihoods was considered an important priority as a means of providing dignity, housing, economic inclusion for Trans persons. It was further noted that 2022 marks 10 years since the landmark adoption of Argentina's Gender Identity Law, which legislated that each person's gender identity should be respected. Mauro Cabral Grinspan was credited for advancing the gender identity law.

Co-chair transition: Canada has co-chaired this Group since 2019 with GATE (Global Action for Trans Equality). GATE left their position in January 2022, and Canada's term

was set to end in September 2022. A CSO co-chair has been identified for 2022-24; the search is ongoing for a state co-chair.

4.(b) SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

Moderator: Omar Baqueiro, Coordinator of the Civil Society Liaison Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico

Speakers:

1. Rashima Kwatra, Senior International Advocacy Advisor, RFSL (virtual)
2. Lana Woolf, Co-Founder and Director, Edge Effect
3. Désirée Hermann Diaz, Swedish Embassy in Mexico
4. Bjørg Sandkjær, Vice Minister of International Development, Norway

Session objective: To discuss where we are in relation to the achievement of the SDGs, barriers and supports to progress, as well as best practices from Member States and civil society to meet the gaps in promoting sustainable development.

Session summary:

- As co-chair of the SDGs and 2030 Agenda Thematic Group, Mexico moderated the session, in which representatives of the Swedish and Norwegian governments, as well as CSOs, discussed the best practices of Member States regarding the advancement of the 2030 Agenda in relation to the rights of LGBTIQ+ populations around the world, to ensure that they are not excluded from development.
- Désirée Hermann Diaz, from the Swedish Embassy in Mexico, mentioned that in the preparation of Voluntary National Reports (VNR's), it is common to neglect data that seems secondary, such as statistics regarding education, employment, housing and health, among others, which provides crosscutting information and allows the level of inclusion of LGBTIQ+ populations to be assessed.
- The Vice Minister of International Development of Norway, Bjørg Sandkjær, explained that her government asks each agency to consider the various beneficiary populations impacted by national policies, in order to obtain data on crosscutting issues (such as gender and diversity) from of the State Ministries.
- During her participation, Lana Wolf, Director of Edge Effect, asked the new ERC co-chairs to do what is necessary so that the Coalition has a greater capacity to respond to crisis situations and offer humanitarian aid to LGBTIQ+ populations.

4.(c) Donor Coordination

Moderator: Mauro Cabral Grinspan, Global Philanthropy Project (GPP)

Speakers:

1. Erika Castellanos, GATE

2. Denitsa Lyubenova, Deystvie
3. Robert Akoto, Former Country Director, Amnesty International Ghana
4. Maria Luisa Peralta, Akahatá

Session objective: The topic of discussion for this session is “Funding Against Authoritarianism – Successful Strategies for Resourcing CSO Responses to Anti-Gender Movements”

Session summary:

- As leaders in coordinating global philanthropic response to Anti-Gender (or Gender Restrictive) Movements, Mauro Cabral Grinspan moderated the session on behalf of the Global Philanthropy Project. The session focused on best practices in foreign and development assistance to respond to the global threat against LGBTQI+ persons represented by well-funded and globally networked anti-rights actors, attacking LGBTQI+ persons directly, and also as a global proxy being instrumentalized to close space for civil society, and to undermine democratic institutions and rule of law.
- Opening remarks highlighted the ways in which these actors cause a constant distraction from and drain on resources that should otherwise go toward protecting and promoting the human rights of all LGBTQI+ persons. This was contrasted with the ways that anti-rights actors are themselves funded, with long-term, multi-year, unrestricted, often duplicative, and mutually reinforcing funding.
- Erika Castellanos, of global transgender rights organization GATE, underscored the impact of these distractions and their impact on the security and sustainability of transgender organizations, and their ability to respond, in terms of: increasing isolation of activists; misrepresentation of trans identities; and bombardment of disinformation in public media. Castellanos named several strategies employed by transgender movements to push back:
 - Building solidarity and allies.
 - Working in partnership with Sex Workers 'Rights movements.
 - Building capacity, human resources, infrastructure.
 - Uplifting existing norms within international systems to stop, delay, or reduce harm.
 - Developing a positive framework to respond.
 - Facilitating the access of trans people to decision making spaces in the international system.
- Recommendations to funders from GATE include:
 - Fund policy-oriented work (e.g. that targeting regulatory frameworks for extremist or terrorist organizations); cut off funding for anti-gender actors.
 - Provide more long-term, flexible, less bureaucratic funding.
 - Support and increase funding for communications.
 - Pair resourcing with diplomatic engagement.

- Denitsa Lyubenova, of Deystvie in Sofia, Bulgaria, remarked on how this dynamic plays out in the Bulgarian context. Technically part of the EU, Bulgaria falls behind on issues of equality – there is no hate crimes legislation and LGBTQI+ persons lack over 500 rights. There is no Legal Gender Recognition, and Intersex children undergo unnecessary surgeries without consent. In 2017-2018, social conservatives feared that adoption of the Istanbul Convention (which addresses domestic violence) would lead to the adoption of “gender ideology,” and so lobbied for the Constitutional Court to find the convention unconstitutional. This anti-equality backlash further led to backlash against advances in children’s rights, and sustained scapegoating of LGBTQI+ persons has resulted in increases in violence and attacks, including attacks on the offices of Deystvie, and blocking of the organization’s financial accounts.
- Strategies the organization has used to respond include:
 - Pro bono legal support, including strategic litigation to use existing laws to bring positive change.
 - Leveraging the European Court of Human Rights – bringing significant numbers of cases before different courts.
 - Sensitivity trainings of police in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior.
 - Annual organization of events, including Sofia Pride.
- Recommendations for ERC Members:
 - Do use political influence to address these issues, especially through Embassies.
 - Engage in these discussions within political families (European Union, in particular).
 - Provide and sustain core funding for movement actors, especially in challenging contexts or closing spaces.
- Robert Akoto, Former Country Director, Amnesty International, Ghana, remarked on the use of religion as a tool for anti-rights actors to access every system. Examples include the impact of Evangelicals on the Ugandan context, and the increases in violence following the World Congress of Families’ gathering in Ghana. He highlighted the use of religion to lobby politicians dependent on faith-based voting blocs. He points to the work of the GIN SOGIE Network, Inclusive and Affirming Ministries, and the Interfaith Network of West Africa as positive counterexamples, where religion has also served as a protective force.
- Recommendations for funders include:
 - Increase funding for work in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - Fund grassroots organizations.
 - International organizations should not speak on behalf of local movements – there must be a move toward funding autonomous in-region movements.
 - Governments should assess whether they are providing assistance to governments that discriminate, and then hold them accountable.
 - All should re-centre the essential need to focus on human rights.

- María Luisa Peralta, of Akahatá, described the situation of sustained strengthening of anti-gender movements across Latin America, including their connections with media, states, and in multilateral spaces. She highlighted that these are not differences of opinion, but rather an intentional anti-rights, anti-democratic agenda. States cannot be neutral because they bear positive obligations with regard to human rights. In light of these dynamics, states must support visas and funds for NGOs to participate in international fora, and reassess parameters for success to align with activist-defined goals.
- Additional recommendations for funders include:
 - Fund out of general and development funds.
 - Create new staffing positions with funds, and provide sufficient resources to affect change.
 - Assess the large subsidies states make to anti-gender movements, e.g. through religious schools that do not provide comprehensive sex education – reduce or eliminate these subsidies, or require and enforce non-discrimination.
 - Fund in-region work; fund unregistered groups; fund campaigns and travel to amplify messaging and maximize movement strength and impact.
 - Value the expertise of LGBTI organizations.

4.(d) International Diplomacy

Moderator: Paul Jansen (OutRight Action International) and Anne-Roos Wasser (the Netherlands)

Speakers:

1. Alistair Stewart, Human Dignity Trust
2. Billie Bryan, Colours Caribbean
3. Lorna Dias, Galck+
4. Jessica Stern, United States Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons
5. Ryan Silverio, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus

Session objective: This session will present the preliminary findings of the mapping of current efforts to decriminalize LGBTIQ+ people; the experience of a coordinated approach from civil society and the diplomatic community in Kenya; and participants will dialogue on next steps, inviting CSOs and Member States in the room to share their views and experiences on how best to support decriminalization efforts in various countries.

Session Summary:

In their introductions, Thematic Group co-chairs Anne-Roos Wasser (Netherlands) and Paul Jansen (Outright Action International) presented the work of the International

Diplomacy Thematic Group (*power point presentation*), including the working group participation, mandate and recent results. The objective of the ERC thematic working group is to *link* diplomats with civil society, *share* best practices and *connect* regions and different stakeholders in order to create *action* towards decriminalisation, crisis response and activities in multilateral spaces.

A **sub-working group on decriminalisation** has undertaken a small research project to map existing efforts to achieve decriminalisation and to identify potential interventions from ERC member states to support local decriminalisation efforts (*ref. short paper circulated*).

The sub-working group on decriminalisation was tasked with identifying five countries for possible engagement from ERC member states. Around the world, almost 70 countries still criminalise same-sex relations. Some recent developments are worth celebrating: St. Kitts and Nevis' courts have ruled that laws criminalising gay sex is unconstitutional, and Singapore has started the process to repeal the colonial penal code provision on gay sex. Strategic litigation to end discriminatory laws is ongoing in many countries, and largely led by CSOs. The sub-working group started with a long list of 19 countries, which has been narrowed down to nine countries based on specific criteria detailed in the report. These criteria include support from local civil society organisations for ERC member states interventions. The list of countries should not be considered a definitive list, and does not include a recommendation for states not to be working in other countries moving towards decriminalisation. Interventions could involve supporting CSO's participation and access to technical and financial resources. Also, encouraging governments and decision makers to use existing avenues to achieve decriminalisation. General findings underline the importance of providing financial resources, consultations between stakeholders, and of coordination between foreign missions themselves and with local CSOs.

A civil society representative explained the decriminalization work of the organisation in a multitude of countries in the **Caribbean**, including the stigma and discrimination that transgender persons face. The representative criticized British courts from stopping progress delivered by Caribbean judges, as she pointed to the fact that the United Kingdom's Privy Council had ruled against same-sex marriage in Bermuda and the Cayman Island. The Privy Council serves as the final court of appeal for several islands in the Caribbean.

A civil society representative talked about the coordination between civil society and the diplomatic community in **Kenya**. In 2014 in Uganda, the Anti-Homosexuality Act was signed into law by president Museveni. This led to an increase of Ugandan asylum seekers in Kenya. Upon an initiative from the Royal Embassy on Norway and Galck+ a forum was set up for information sharing and coordination between foreign missions, LGBTI organisations and human rights organisations, to promote the rights of LGBTI. This group was organised as a sub-group of the development partners group in Kenya. Objectives included contributing to implementing the bill of human rights in the Kenya

constitution, aid effectiveness, and to link up to regional and global human rights mechanisms. The group also coordinates with the local human rights defenders (HRD) diplomatic working group. Co-chairs are one foreign mission (Canada now) and Galck+ (elected by LGBTI organisations).

A civil society representative moderated a participant dialogue on the next steps for the work of the International Diplomacy Working Group. They referred to the situation in **South-East Asia**, and the fact that 5 out of 11 countries criminalise LGBTI people. Political and religious fundamentalist groups block political and legal reforms.

An ERC member state representative recognised the value of the analysis done by the sub-working group on decriminalisation, and confirmed that member states will make use of the research report. Decriminalisation in one country often has a positive impact on neighbouring countries. States should pledge financial support to the follow up on the report, and this could be considered in the donor coordination working group. The representative put forward a recommendation that ERC working groups hold executive sessions for member states (only), to brainstorm on funding opportunities.

A civil society representative raised the question of the effectiveness of silent diplomacy, as local activist often advice foreign governments against speaking publicly about decriminalisation.

An ERC Member State representative confirmed that there are cases where silent diplomacy has had an impact, although such information cannot be revealed. Public statements are the least likely for any government to use in relation to decriminalisation efforts. A confrontational approach is usually not received well. But ERC Member States still need to engage when opposition forces seek to discredit LGBTI people.

In the questions and comments session, a civil society representative recommended an approach that would involve dialogue with national government representatives. It is important that local LGBTI activists make their voices heard, so that it cannot be portrayed as a Western idea. This includes sharing knowledge with the public about LGBTI people and the challenges they face.

A civil society representative referred to the last meeting in Vancouver in 2018, and the toolkit for ERC diplomacy. Important that the International Diplomacy Thematic Group is capable of following up on decriminalisation and crisis response.

Another civil society representative spoke about the need to change local norms and culture along with decriminalisation efforts. The ERC must engage with and involve local LGBTI representatives in its work, to avoid a top-down approach and ensure that promoting LGBTI rights involves an intersectional approach.

Another civil society representative raised the need to include more voices from the South in the ERC. It was suggested that a regional mechanism could be set up for those countries that are excluded in Asia. Countries like the Philippines and Nepal should be persuaded to join the ERC.

CSO co-chair Jansen concluded that we must not lose sight of the ERC strategy, and the need to ensure implementation of all strategic objectives. Utilising national and regional mechanisms should be part of the decriminalisation efforts. A sub-group on crisis response could be considered. “The ERC is all of us. We need everybody to make it work”, said Jansen. ERC co-chair Wasser also emphasised the need for other member countries to step up and take the lead.

5. UK Report Launch: “Ending Violence Against LGBTQI+ People – Global Evidence and Emerging Insights into What Works”

On the afternoon of 8 September Lord Herbert announced to the conference the death of Her late Majesty the Queen. Plans for the UK to host an evening Reception for all ERC representatives in Buenos Aires were therefore cancelled. Instead, the report was launched during the conference with a session that included a pre-recorded message from UK minister for LGBTI rights, Vicky Ford, and comments from Lord Herbert. Key points are below.

Vicky Ford, UK Minister for LGBT+ Rights

- Today, marks the launch of a groundbreaking new report on tackling violence against LGBT+ people.
- The report found that for loving who they love, and being who they are, violence – and the fear of violence – are an everyday reality for LGBT+ people around the world.
- Alarming, this violence often starts in childhood, and has devastating long-term impacts.
- Let me be completely plain: This is wrong, and we must all do more to end it.
- The UK is proud to have funded this independent report through the flagship *What Works to Prevent Violence* programme, which helps to highlight the success of grassroots LGBT+ organisations working tirelessly on this issue and explain the report's recommendations, which researchers developed in consultation with these courageous organisations.
- Now is the time for action. We need to urgently increase our work at every level of society. We need to build the global evidence base to understand what prevents this violence. We need to work together to drive a more effective global response. We will not stop.
- Everyone has a role to play in tackling this violence – policymakers, civil society, community leaders, and researchers. Let us make today our opportunity to build a safer and more inclusive world for us all.

Lord Herbert, UK Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights

- The UK is proud to be sharing with you this brand-new, independent report produced through the UK's pioneering *What Works to Prevent Violence* programme.

- The report is the first of its kind to bring together evidence from all over the world on the shocking rates of violence experienced by LGBT+ people because of who they are and how they exist in this world.
- This violence is too high in every region: over half of LGBT+ people in Southern and Eastern Africa have been physically or sexually assaulted, in Iran a quarter have experience violence at work, and in Thailand over half have been bullied in school.
- It puts weight behind what we already know – that violence threatens the lives and wellbeing of LGBT+ people and prevents them from fully accessing education, healthcare, and jobs.
- It also reminds us that as the world faces multiple crises, LGBT+ people are among the most vulnerable. Stories from Syria, Afghanistan and most recently Ukraine, reveal the acute threats and risks that LGBT+ people face in conflict.
- Most importantly, the report includes a wealth of insights on what *can* be done to prevent this violence. There is no magic bullet – we need action at all levels, in families, communities, across societies and internationally.
- We could not have produced this report without the vital knowledge of LGBT+ organisations working on the frontline. I want to particularly thank those who contributed their expertise to help shape the recommendations in this report. We now owe it to you to put this learning into action to drive change for LGBT+ people around the world.
- I want to finish with my personal thanks for everything you are already doing to support LGBT+ people to live freely and equally. I know we are all determined to keep going and do more.

Copies of the report were distributed at the conference and were well received. A link to the report is [here](#).

6. Closing session: Joint Statement and Co-Chairship Handover

6.(a) Adoption of Joint Statement of the ERC Global LGBTI Conference

All ERC Member States adopted the joint statement, which highlighted the stronger and more sustainable position the ERC was in since our last in person convening in 2018. The ERC now had a five-year Strategy and Implementation Plan to guide and shape our work, and all ERC Member States had committed to its delivery; the ERC's membership was now more engaged, with increased participation in the ERC Thematic Groups with their focus on Strategy delivery. Our discussions in Buenos Aires built on shared principles and our collective commitments and efforts to date. We renewed our commitment to actively work together on the delivery of the ERC Strategy and to the imminent creation of the ERC's Secretariat, marking the next phase of the ERC's development. **The full agreed statement is at Annex A**, and is also online [here](#).

6.(b) Closing comments and handing over the co-chairship to Mexico and Germany

This final session officially closed the Buenos Aires conference and marked the end of the UK and Argentina's tenure as ERC co-chairs, looking forward to leadership from Germany and Mexico.

Speakers:

1. Lord Herbert of South Downs, UK Special Envoy
2. Peter Neven, Charge d'Affaires, Germany
3. Lilia Rossbach, Ambassador of Mexico in Argentina
4. Claudio Rozencwaig, Undersecretary for Foreign Policy, Argentina

Key Points:

Lord Herbert, UK Special Envoy on LGBT+ Rights

- Thank you all for attending and for your commitment to the ERC. Thank you, Victor, and to Ministers and high-level participants; thank you to our four Thematic Group chairs; to our CSO co-chairs; and most importantly to our Member State co-chair, Argentina, who have been excellent partners over the past three years and who have graciously hosted us in the beautiful Palacio San Martín over the past few days.
- There is a greater sense of collaboration now and we are on track to become a strong and formidable coalition; one that is determined to end the violence and

discrimination faced by LGBTI persons globally; and to bring to an end the ongoing criminalisation of LGBTI people.

- The UK looks forward to continuing to work closely within the ERC and with likeminded partners to advance human rights and equality for all.
- I am delighted to now hand over to our wonderful new co-chairs, the representatives from Mexico and Germany.

Peter Neven, Charge d’Affaires, Germany

- Germany is delighted to replace the United Kingdom as the next ERC co-chairs. We are also delighted to partner with our friends Mexico.
- Our priorities remain the delivery of the ERC’s Strategy and Implementation Plan and we have committed funding for the creation of the ERC’s first Secretariat.

Lilia Rossbach, Ambassador of Mexico in Argentina

The priorities for Mexico’s 2022-2024 co-chairing will be:

- To address the implementation of the ERC Global Strategy and full compliance with the current Five-Year Implementation Plan 2021-2026.
- To establish a Secretariat that functions as an administrative unit of the ERC and that allows the co-chairs to concentrate more on the executive tasks of the Coalition.
- To put an effort to increase the membership of States and civil society organizations within the Coalition, mainly the Global South countries, which currently have a little representation.
- To promote attention to the existing gaps in humanitarian assistance that impact LGBTIQ+ people in multiple crisis contexts around the world.
- And also, to advance national legislative LGBTIQ+ agendas among the ERC State members, on issues like the recognition of gender identity and the prohibition of conversion therapies; as encouraging more political participation of LGBTIQ+ people.

Claudio Rozencwaig, Undersecretary for Foreign Policy, Argentina

It is a pleasure to announce that throughout these days, the 42 States that make up the ERC have agreed on a joint declaration that reflects and reiterates our commitment to the Coalition and the protection and promotion of human rights.

The ERC commits to:

- Listen to the experiences of LGBTI+ people through consultation with LGBTI+ civil society, in order to inform our policies and programs.
- Try to strengthen the presence and voices of the Global South through its sovereign states and civil society organizations.
- Work together to promote adequate protection measures for intersex persons and encourage States to implement policies and procedures, as appropriate, to ensure that medical practices are consistent with international human rights.

- Provide technical advice, capacity building and exchange of best practices in order to support the change of laws and policies in ERC Member States and other countries around the world.
- Strengthen the role of the ERC through a specific administrative unit and a new focus on the part of the Member States in the contribution to the priorities of the Thematic Groups.
- Identify and design specific initiatives to support and empower LGBTI+ people both in terms of women's rights and LGBTI+ policies and programs, as this population faces increased risk as a consequence of the intersection between oppression based on gender, violence against the LGBTI+ collective and the invisibility of LGBTI+ women.
- Promote the establishment of specific policies for transgender and non-binary people so that they can live their lives fully, freely and without risk of violence or persecution, particularly in workplaces.

Annex A: Joint Statement of the ERC Global LGBTI Conference

9 September 2022

Buenos Aires, Argentina

We, the ministers and representatives of the member countries of the Equal Rights Coalition, have come together in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 8-9 September 2022, and pledged to work together to build a world where the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all are respected, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. We aim to ensure that all LGBTI+ persons have decent living conditions that they can play a full and active part in society, and that no one is left behind.

Since our last in-person Conference in Vancouver in 2018, some welcome progress has been made, including the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex acts in six countries. However, progress is far from universal or consistent. There is growing evidence of movements that seek to undermine the freedoms and human rights of LGBTI+ persons. This is putting lives and communities at risk. More needs to be done, at every level of society and internationally, to help ensure LGBTI+ persons are safe and their rights are respected. As members of the Equal Rights Coalition, we will not stop working until this is achieved.

These human rights abuses and violations – which we condemn unequivocally – are on the rise. They include discrimination, violence and arbitrary arrests, based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. Several actors, including states, are mobilising narratives that appeal to “traditional values” and cultural divisions to justify new anti-LGBTI+ legislation, often referred to as the global anti-gender movement.

In recent years, we have worked together to take action – through public pronouncements, diplomatic interventions and knowledge sharing – in response to reports of LGBTI+ persons facing abuses and violations of their human rights in every corner of the world. All groups in vulnerable situations, including LGBTI+ persons, face a disproportionate humanitarian impact from conflict, such as in Afghanistan and Ukraine among other parts of the world, and crises, such as the ongoing challenges of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the unique needs of LGBTI+ persons within broader humanitarian responses is critical to effective recovery and resilience against future crises. The ERC remains committed to facing these challenges together and mobilising quickly, when required, to face future challenges.

We have also strengthened the ERC's existing role in the multilateral system. We are proud of the role ERC member states, and civil society partners, played in securing the renewal of the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity ('IE SOGI') at the 50th session of the UN Human Rights Council in July 2022. We will continue working together to strengthen the representation of SOGI in the UN and other regional and multilateral fora, working closely with the UN LGBTI+ Core Groups and the Group of Friends of the UN SOGI Independent Expert.

At this year's ERC conference, we welcome the presence of observer states from different regions, whose perspectives enrich our work. We are committed to bringing in new voices, particularly those from the Global South, to consider the economic and legal inequalities, varied educational opportunities, and social exclusions that exacerbate challenges faced by LGBTI+ people, and whose specific knowledge and experiences should be taken into consideration. We also commit to strengthening existing participation, as current members of the ERC, to concretely engage in the work of the Coalition.

Our discussions in Buenos Aires built on our shared principles and on our collective efforts to date. We have reviewed the ERC Strategic Plan and 5 Year Implementation Plan that were signed in July 2021. We have agreed to continue delivering against this plan and we have renewed the pledges we made at the founding of the ERC in Montevideo in 2016 and our Vancouver conference in 2018.

Following Argentina and the UK's extended tenure as co-chairs, the ERC is now in a stronger and more sustainable position to fulfil its potential. Specifically, we are motivated by the work done to establish soon an ERC administrative unit. This will support the new ERC co-chairs, Germany and Mexico, and those who follow, to deliver effectively and efficiently in accordance to the ERC Strategy and Implementation Plan. We thank Mexico for leading the consultation process and welcome the pledges from the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands to fund this unit.

Based on our deliberations at the Global LGBTI+ Conference in Buenos Aires, we commit to advancing the work of the ERC by further strengthening its collaboration with its key partners, including civil society, international organisations, multilateral and development agencies, academia, the private sector and all others working to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of LGBTI+ persons. Over the coming years, we commit to:

- Proudly championing the human rights, fundamental freedoms and decent living conditions of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex characteristics.

- Strengthening cooperation to end violence against LGBTI+ people by building an evidence base of the key issues that contribute to this violence and working together, at all levels, to tackle them.
- Advancing the rights of LGBTI+ persons as part of the international and domestic policies of our governments, by sharing knowledge from the ERC across our institutions and highlighting the importance of policymaking that addresses intersectionality.
- Strengthening our support for civil society organisations, human rights defenders, and community leaders who are making a positive impact on the ground, often at great personal risk.
- Providing technical advice, capacity building and exchanges of best practice, in order to support legislative and policy changes within ERC member states and other countries around the world.
- Listening to the experiences of LGBTI+ persons, through consultation with LGBTI+ civil society, to inform our policies and programmes and ensure they are country specific and effectively targeted at the areas that will achieve the strongest outcomes.
- Strengthening the role of the Equal Rights Coalition, through a dedicated administrative unit and renewed focus from member states to contribute to the priorities of the thematic groups.
- Seeking to strengthen the presence and the voices of the Global South through its sovereign states and its civil social organizations.
- Countering the negative impacts of the global anti-gender movement, which threatens to undermine human rights and restrict the work of civil society organisations supporting women and girls and vulnerable groups, including LGBTI+ persons.
- Strengthening our ability to quickly and effectively mobilise in response to crises and conflict due to the more unstable world in which we now live.
- Strengthening relations with the private sector and to work together to foster in all sectors of society, including workplaces, the human rights of LGBTI+ persons.
- Applying an analysis of intersectionality when working for the human rights and inclusive development of LGBTI+ persons, as applicable.
- Identifying and designing targeted initiatives to support and empower LGBTI+ persons across both women's rights and LGBTI+ policies and programmes, as this populations is at heightened risk due to the intersections of gender-based oppressions, anti-LGBTI+ violence, and the invisibility of LGBTI+ women.
- Encouraging the establishment of specific policies for transgender and non-binary persons to live their lives fully, freely and without the threat of violence or persecution, particularly in workplaces.
- Working together to advocate appropriate protections for intersex persons and encourage states to implement policies and procedures, as appropriate, to ensure that medical practices are consistent with international human rights obligations.

- Encouraging States to strengthen information gathering on the number, diversity, and needs of LGBTI+ individuals and communities, with special attention on official documentation and reports of human rights abuses and violations based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics, including through collaboration with civil society to develop and implement human rights-based and evidence-based policies.

To ensure effective and timely delivery against these pledges, we will review progress on these commitments and on our program of work in our periodic meetings during the next two years, culminating in our next global conference in 2024.

Fully aware that all our countries face different challenges in their paths towards equality, we hereby reiterate our unwavering commitment to protecting and promoting the human rights of all LGBTI+ persons both within our countries and beyond.