



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2013
Statement under Working Session – Freedom of Assembly and Association
by COC Netherlands, Kyrgyz Indigo and Labrys (Kyrgyzstan), as delivered 27-09-2013

Thank you,

This statement is made on behalf of COC Netherlands and LGBTI* organizations in Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyz Indigo and Labrys. I'd like to focus on freedom of assembly and association, when it concerns LGBTI organizations in Central Asia.

In Kyrgyzstan LGBT initiative "Pathfinder" faced many challenges when registering as LGBT organization and it was firstly rejected by the Ministry of Justice, which issued a letter saying that aims of the organization undermine traditional and moral values of the Kyrgyz society. Though Pathfinder was able to register as a youth organization, the prolongation of registration process negatively affected the organization. I want to remind Kyrgyzstan that we have to prioritize human rights and rule of law over traditional and cultural values. Such values must NOT be a justification for restricting and violating our freedom of assembly and association.

Traditional, cultural and moral values became an instrument, when religious organizations de facto force the Government to restrict freedoms and rights of civil activists. For instance, last week the Ministry of Education of Kyrgyzstan officially stated they are intending to forbid informational brochures on sexual education of local NGO "Reproductive Health Alliance", however, back in 2004 this NGO got approval from the Ministry of Education to publish the brochure and positive review from Kyrgyz Academy of Education. It's clear that the Ministry of Education is restricting the activities of the civil society and prioritizing vague and unclear traditional and moral values over rights and freedoms of civil society activists.

I also want to mention neighboring Uzbekistan, where my fellow activists are not able to register officially thus unable to get any financial support, which makes them highly unstable and unprotected. The state has set up its own quasi-NGOs, which distribute available funding to organizations that follow official policies. In recent UPR review Uzbekistan received recommendations on freedom of association and assembly, but the recommendations were rejected. This situation leads to high vulnerability of LGBT individuals to HIV and other health risks, since even mainstream HIV-programming avoids to work with men who have sex with men.

I ask CA states to:

Allow for registration of all NGOs that meet the administrative criteria for registration and allow those de-registered to appeal the decision and demonstrate that they have met the relevant criteria and be re-registered.

Allow the free operation of organizations providing SRH services, including LGBT individuals, and encourage the spread of information around safe sex and prevention practices.

Apply comprehensive human-rights approach to policies, laws and programmes;

Reaffirm that cultural, traditional and religious values can NOT justify any forms of violence and discrimination against LGBTI;

Thank you!

** LGBTI = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex*