

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**TO THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA**

**The Hague, 16 May 2013**

*To be delivered by Navanethem Pillay,  
The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

I am pleased to send greetings to this first International Forum organized by the Government of The Netherlands to mark the International Day against Homophobia. I especially thank Her Majesty Queen Máxima of The Netherlands for supporting this important event.

The fight against homophobia is a core part of the broader battle for human rights for all. It sits alongside the long-standing work of the United Nations to eliminate racism and promote gender equality. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights promises a world that is free and equal, and we will only honour that promise if everyone – without exception – enjoys the protection they deserve.

For generations, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in all regions have been subjected to terrible violence on account of their sexual orientation and gender identity. They have been treated with contempt, derision and discrimination. They have been made to feel anything but free and equal.

For far too long, their suffering was met with silence in the halls of power. As Secretary-General, I am committed to raising my voice. Along with many committed partners, we are working to elevate this struggle and draw greater attention to the specific challenges facing the LGBT members of our human family. I appreciate all those who support this effort and call on others to engage.

We know what needs to be done. Draconian laws used to criminalize and punish LGBT people must be replaced by new laws that are in harmony with universal human rights conventions and protect everyone from discrimination on grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Public education is also essential to challenge negative stereotypes and promote greater understanding.

Ending homophobia is a matter of personal security, dignity and even survival for countless individuals. It is also a long-term endeavour – one that I believe is critical to the mission of the United Nations.

I thank you for your commitment to the cause and wish you fruitful discussions in the coming days. With the force of our conviction, let us continue working for a world of true freedom and equality for all.