



**THE COALITION OF LGBTTTI AND SEX WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS FROM LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN CELEBRATE THE CULMINATION OF ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO RESTRICT SPACES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION**

Washington DC, October 22, 2020

**SUMMARY**

The *Coalition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Transsexual, Transvestite, Intersex (LGBTTTI) Organizations* and *Sex Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean* that work within the framework of the *Organization of American States (OAS)*, participated in the 50th Ordinary Period of Sessions of the General Assembly, which was held in the city of Washington DC. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings took place virtually on October 20 and 21, 2020.

In this context and in the face of repeated restrictions, we object to and reject the limited participation that Civil Society was given in the General Committee. We also denounce the attempt of opposition groups to elect as spokespersons people who act as legislators. Such participants should be in the spaces of State representation and not as representatives of Civil Society. These infractions are an egregious violation of the rules established by the OAS, which is why the General Secretariat took measures to resolve this situation.

**Dialogue with heads of delegation, general secretary and civil society**

For the second consecutive year, the *Coalition of People who practice Sex Work*, made up of national female sex workers organizations, grouped in the *Latin American and Caribbean Sex Workers Network (RedTraSex* by its Spanish name), had a key role in the Dialogue. Presenting before heads of delegation, the Secretary General of the OAS, and civil society was particularly crucial at this time, as workers in the informal economy have suffered devastating consequences from the pandemic.

Along these lines, we continue to witness the absence of clear regulations that recognize sex work as work, an omission that promotes the perpetration of institutional violence, including sexual and physical violence, extortion, and illegal detentions. These omissions reinforce the obstacles that prevent access to basic health care and justice services. Physical distancing is a fundamental measure to combat COVID-19. However, exclusion from work has confronted many people in the informal sector with the decision to either stop working to take care of their health

and that of their families, or to try to work for their basic needs. This exposes them both to the threat of the virus and to increased violence by security forces.

It is for this reason that we demand that public policies be informed by an intersectional approach that allows state assistance to reach the most vulnerable and precarious populations. This takes into account the needs of people who practice sex work, whose work is largely through physical contact. Since 2017 the IACHR has not granted another hearing on sex work, despite numerous requests.

The representatives of *the LGBTTTI Coalition* reiterated the grave and inordinate impact of the humanitarian and health crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic on our populations. Institutional and private violence against trans people have increased tremendously with restrictive isolation and distancing measures. Catastrophic social hostility has grown against LGBTIQ + people in general. The conservative and repressive turn of many states in response to the pandemic is alarming, especially considering the widely-held belief that home and family are safe spaces. To the contrary, the acute increase in femicides, hate crimes, and suicides during the pandemic clearly demonstrates that for many people, home and family are not safe spaces at all. Quarantines and school closings have left LGBT children and adolescents exposed to family violence, and many have been cruelly expelled from their homes.

It was gratifying to note that a growing number of allies integrated a message of equality and non-discrimination during the dialogue prior to the General Assembly. However, groups opposing the expansion of rights continue to promote messages that attempt to undermine the rights of historically oppressed populations in the Americas.

### **Dialogue with the Secretary for Access to Rights**

In the dialogue held with the Secretary for Access to Rights, Farah Diva Urrutia, her team, and the people who make up the *Coalition*, we exchanged reflections on the importance of the Secretariat's processes. We emphasized the significance of recognizing more rights for more people and thus, leaving no one behind. We want to highlight the willingness of Secretary Urrutia to follow up on hemispheric commitments with respect to LGBTIQ + people. In addition, we welcome the technical assistance that the OAS can provide to civil society and States to acknowledge the human rights of all people.

### **Resolution, Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.**

As we have every year since 2008, we are compelled to reaffirm the crucial importance of Human Rights. This can only be enacted through the prevention of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people on the continent through the adoption, once again, of the Resolution, Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Draft.

At the same time, we want to express our concern that within the discussions of the omnibus Human Rights resolution. The contents of the section dedicated to strengthening the Inter-American Commission on Women (IACW) and the section dedicated to the Follow-up Mechanism of the Convention of *Belém do Pará* (Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women) were called into question. This questioning constitutes a considerable rollback of progress already attained in previous years, as it sought to eliminate the recognition of women in all their diversity and an intersectional approach. This position was led initially by

Colombia, who later withdrew its insistence on reexamination, only to be replaced in the task by St. Lucia.

Suppressing the intersectional approach is profoundly deleterious and does not affect only trans, lesbian and bisexual women, but also undermines the rights of indigenous, Afro-descendant, migrant, sex worker, disabled and impoverished women, among others. Avoiding talking about women in all their diversity and opposing the intersectional approach will take the OAS Human Rights resolution back to a language and approach that predates the historic IV World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Fortunately, the hard work of some delegations permitted the retention of the intersectional approach and the inclusion of women in all their diversity. Both will guide the work of the IACW and will strengthen the application of the Convention of Belém do Pará.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The LGBTTTI Coalition congratulates the bodies that make up the Organization of American States responsible for achieving a successful General Assembly despite the context derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. We applaud its commitment to advancing the matter of dialogue as we encourage member states to continue guaranteeing the Human Rights of all populations without distinction, without stigma and without discrimination.

Signed by the following organizations that are part of the LGBTTTI Coalition and of Sex Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean that work within the framework of the OAS:

1. Argentina - AKAHATÁ Equipo de Trabajo en Sexualidades y Género
2. Argentina - ATTTA (RedLACTrans)
3. Belize - TIA Belize (RedLACTrans)
4. Belize - United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM)
5. Bolivia - Red Nacional de Mujeres Trans en Bolivia (REDTREBOL) (RedLACTrans)
6. Bolivia - Fundación Diversencia
7. Brasil - Articulação Política das Juventudes Negras
8. Brasil - Grupo Ativista de Travestis, Transexuais e Amig@s (GATTA)
9. Brasil - Grupo Esperança
10. Brasil - Liga Brasileira de Lesbicas (LBL)
11. Brasil - Rede Nacional de Negr@s e Afros LGBTTT (Rede-afros- lgbts)
12. Brasil - Rede Trans De Brasil
13. Canadá - \*The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network – Canada (\*Miembro Asociado)
14. Chile - Asociación OTD Organizando Trans Diversidades
15. Chile - Corporación Chilena de Personas Trans Amanda Jofré (RedLACTrans)
16. Colombia - Asociación Líderes en Acción
17. Colombia – Caribe Afirmativo
18. Colombia - Colombia Diversa
19. Colombia - Fundación Santamaría
20. Colombia - Red Comunitaria Trans (RedLACTrans)
21. Costa Rica - Mulabi - Espacio Latinoamericano de Sexualidades y Derechos
22. Costa Rica - TRANSVIDA (RedLACTrans)
23. Costa Rica – Asociación Ciudadana Acceder
24. Dominica - Dominica Chapter of the Caribbean HIV and AIDS partnership (ChapDominica)

25. Ecuador - Asociación Alfil (RedLACTrans)
26. Ecuador - Taller de Comunicación Mujer
27. El Salvador - Asociación Aspidh Arcoiris (RedLACTrans)
28. Grenada - Grenada Chapter of the Caribbean HIV and AIDS Partnership (GrenCHAP)
29. Guatemala - Organización Trans Reinas de la Noche (OTRANS) (RedLACTrans)
30. Guyana - Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD)
31. Haití -Action Communautaire Pour L'integration Des Femmes Vulnerables en Haiti (ACIFVH)
32. Honduras – Asociación para una Vida Mejor (APUVIMEH)
33. Honduras - Colectivo Unidad Color Rosa (RedLACTrans)
34. Jamaica - J-FLAG
35. México - Letra S SIDA, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana
36. México - Red Mexicana de Mujeres Trans (RedLACTrans)
37. México - Fundación Arcoiris por el Respeto a la Diversidad Sexual A.C.
38. México – Las Reinas Chulas, Cabaret y Derechos Humanos, A.C
39. Nicaragua - Red Nicaragüense de Activistas Trans (REDTRANS)
40. Nicaragua - ODETRANS (RedLACTrans)
41. Panamá - Asociación Panameña de Personas Trans (RedLACTrans)
42. Panamá – Fundación Iguales
43. Paraguay - Aireana Grupo por los Derechos de las Lesbianas
44. Paraguay - Asociación Panambi (RedLACTrans)
45. Paraguay - Asociación Escalando
46. Perú - Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (PROMSEX)
47. Perú - Instituto Runa de Desarrollo y Estudios sobre Género
48. Perú – Trans Organización Feminista por los Derechos Humanos (RedLACTrans)
49. Regional - Caribbean Forum for Liberation and Acceptance of Genders and Sexualities (CARIFLAGS)
50. Regional - Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Personas Trans (REDLACTRANS)
51. Regional - Red de Trabajadoras Sexuales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (REDTRASEX)
52. Regional - Synergía – Iniciativas por los Derechos Humanos
53. República Dominicana - Comunidad de Trans Travesti y Trabajadoras Sexuales Dominicana COTRAVETD (RedLACTrans)
54. República Dominicana – Diversidad Dominicana
55. St. Lucia - United & Strong Inc.
56. Sub regional - Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE)
57. Suriname - Women's Way Foundation
58. The Bahamas - The D' Marco Organization (RedLACTrans)
59. Trinidad and Tobago – CAISO
60. United States - Hondureños Contra el Sida
61. United States – Con Mujeres Gender Justice de SWOP (SouthWest Organizing Project)
62. Uruguay - Asociación Trans del Uruguay (ATRU)
63. Uruguay - Colectivo Ovejas Negras
64. Venezuela - Venezuela Diversa Asociación Civil
65. Venezuela - Diversidad e Igualdad a Través de la Ley (DIVERLEX)