



United States Mission to the OSCE

Replies to the Holy See on the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOT)

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 12, 2016

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to respond to the statement just made by our distinguished colleague from the Holy See.

I'm not sure – especially since he made clear that his delegation does not recognize this day – why he felt obliged to take the floor, but I'm glad that he did. Indeed, I found much to agree with him, much as a basis for future discussions, in what he said. I took some notes, but I look forward to reading the statement in full. And certainly we agree that "the equality of men and women rests on their dignity as persons and flows from it," and that "every person, regardless of his or her sexual orientation, ought to be respected." I do want to just offer a different view on a few points:

One is whether or not we should limit ourselves --particularly in dialogue, or in this forum-- to things that we have already agreed on. I think one of the uses of dialogue – and I think the statement offered by Canada on behalf of several other states today was an exemplary example of this – is to identify areas where there is disagreement or a lack of shared understanding, and to attempt to reach shared understanding. And that if we limited ourselves to the places only where we agree we would never move forward on anything. And I think the moral, doctrinal view that was expressed in the first half of the statement by our distinguished colleague from the Holy See actually gives the grounds for further reflection about what additional work might be necessary in order for us to be morally coherent in our work in this organization.

Finally, just a couple other points:

One, I don't think it's accurate to say that this is a day that is recognized by only a few participating States; indeed, those who spoke today spoke on behalf of a vast majority of participating States, so I'd just like to point that out.

And secondly, just to reassure my distinguished colleague from the Holy See: my parents don't find my being gay difficult, they are proud of me without any regard to my sexual orientation.

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Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our distinguished colleague from the Holy See.

I listened to what you said, and I hear it. I guess the point I'm trying to make is that I think a lot of the statements given today reflect the view that in working on this issue we are not, in fact, changing course or starting work on something new, we are rather making good on a promise that was always there. And I see that as something that the Holy See might have special insights into: making good on a promise that was always there. And so I look forward to continuing the discussion on this topic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.