

**OSCE High Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
Astana, 29-30 June 2010**

Plenary Session 3

Intervention by the United Kingdom

Thank you Mr Moderator.

I congratulate the Kazakh Chairmanship on its farsighted vision to propose and organise this conference.

The UK is committed to promoting and protecting human rights for all people throughout the world, without discrimination on any grounds, as enshrined in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Human rights should be applied to everyone, and it is important that we all work to achieve this end. Conferences like this provide us with the opportunity to highlight progress that we have made but also to identify where more work needs to be done to address issues of tolerance and non-discrimination.

Unfortunately, there are still too many cases around the world of people being discriminated against. This can be on the basis of religion, race, gender, disability or sexual orientation. The UK believes that it is important to highlight discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation as an area where many states still need to make progress. In the world today - over 70 countries still criminalise same sex relationships. This is itself a human rights issue, and has an adverse impact more broadly, including other areas of our human rights work: democratic governance and sustainable development cannot take place where groups of people are excluded from enjoying their civil liberties.

In the UK we have our own programme and guidelines for promoting the human rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-sexual (LGBT) people around the world. This focuses on decriminalisation, non-discrimination in the application of human rights, protecting human rights defenders and health issues.

The EU has also recently adopted an LGBT Toolkit to promote and protect LGBT rights, and to identify opportunities for bilateral and multilateral progress. As the distinguished speaker from Spain has said, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights rules out discrimination on any grounds. This brings us full circle. Human rights are universal and there is no hierarchy of rights. All of us have a duty to act.