

16th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review

Presented by Dane Lewis

COC Netherlands

Mr. President

COC Netherlands and The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) make the following joint statement.

We are encouraged by Jamaica's adoption of the recommendation by Slovenia for training of law enforcement officials and as well the examination of recommendations made by Belgium and the Netherlands for public campaigns to combat sexual orientation discrimination.

However, we are saddened at the suggestion that there is no evidence of mob-related attacks or killings or ongoing human rights violations faced by **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** persons as this stance totally disregards the reality articulated by members of the community. LGBT people continue to be the victims of extortion, physical abuse and harassment by non-state actors and state actors such as the police as cited in a recent incident in February in Montego Bay, St. James.

While we understand Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity remains a sensitive issue for Jamaica we urge the leaders of our country to recognise that cultural norms and values should not prevail over the reality that vulnerable and marginalised groups such as LGBT continue to face various degrees of discrimination because of who they are not who they choose to be, **and need to be protected.**

Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender Persons have made and continue to make an important contribution in the development and global recognition of our country. J-FLAG recognises Jamaica's leadership and commitment in the area of human rights as was demonstrated by their historical support of issues relating to the fight against Apartheid in South Africa. We hope that the Government of Jamaica will demonstrate its leadership yet again in the fight against intolerance for LGBT Jamaicans.

As recommended in the UPR process, we encourage the Government to take bold steps towards decriminalisation of consensual same sex activities particularly as this drives LGBT underground and away from effective HIV and AIDS Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support interventions. We also ask that in the current review of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms there be consideration of a more inclusive clause to be adopted for non-discrimination.

Thank you Mr President