

## Update on DFA commitments under the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, 2019-2021

1. The Government adopted the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy in 2019, which is overseen by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The lifetime of the strategy will shortly be extended to end 2022.
2. The Strategy identifies five actions for DFA: three relate to the integration of LGBTI+ rights across Ireland's foreign policy and the work of the embassy network (25.1, 25.2 and 25.3), while two are in the area of service delivery: engagement with LGBTI+ diaspora communities (25.4) and consular service provision to LGBTI+ persons (26.4). Details of these commitments and action by the Department to implement them are set out in the annex.
3. Implementation of the Strategy is overseen by a strategy committee, chaired by Minister O'Gorman, which meets on a quarterly basis, with a membership of LGBTI+ civil society organisations and representatives of departments. Gerard Keown is the Department's representative on the committee.
4. Departments report on a quarterly basis to the committee on implementation of their commitments. DFA's first return was made in November 2020, with a short update provided in February 2021. The most recent update took account of the impact of Covid-19 on how the Department is meeting its commitments, noting in particular in relation to action 26.4, Government travel advice.
5. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth maintains a traffic light system to monitor progress towards implementation of commitments; all of DFA's actions are indicated as 'green/on track for delivery.'
6. Preparation of returns under the strategy reveal that large areas of the Department at HQ and the mission network are engaged on LGBTI+ issues, while Corporate Services and Human Resources Divisions are engaged in respect of DFA as an inclusive employer. It is not possible to capture the breadth or variety of this action, in particular the breadth of mission activity, in returns to the committee, and the Department might consider capturing this in another way.
7. The committee also receives presentations from departments. Gerard Keown briefed the committee on 11 March on actions by DFA to meet its commitments, drawing from the returns submitted to date. At the meeting, questions were asked about actions which the Department and the mission network take to support LGBTI+ rights in countries where LGBTI+ persons face discrimination or persecution, and the situations in [REDACTED]. Minister O'Gorman expressed appreciation for the work the Department is undertaking and indicated that he had recently met the [REDACTED] ambassador to discuss the situation facing LGBTI+ persons in that country.
8. The next meeting of the committee is expected in June 2021.

Gerard Keown

22 March 2021

## **Summary of DFA's commitments and actions under the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy, 2019-2021**

***Outcome 25: Ireland continues to raise the issue of LGBTI+ rights at an International level and supports Human Rights Defenders and civil society groups in embassies and overseas missions***

***Action 25.1 Continue to integrate the promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTI+ individuals into Ireland's foreign policy.***

Protecting and upholding the rights of LGBTI+ persons is a key priority under 'The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World', and is supported by Ireland's international development policy, 'A Better World' and Ireland's new Diaspora Policy 2020-2025, 'Global Ireland'. Promoting and protecting the rights of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) specifically, including LGBTI+ HRDs, is also a priority of Irish foreign policy and is reflected in our support at home and overseas.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and its overseas missions advocate for the rights of LGBTI+ persons across multilateral and bilateral engagement, including by advocating for the decriminalisation of homosexuality where it exists and against its criminalisation where this is contemplated.

Ireland's embassy network also actively supports LGBTI+ rights by participating in Gay Pride parades and similar events across the world, by marking IDAHOT Day and by offering support to LGBTI+ civil society organisations. In 2019, the embassy network hosted a series of screenings of 'The Queen of Ireland'.

Ireland's third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, launched in June 2019, explicitly recognises that women are not a homogenous group, and face many and varied forms of discrimination, including for belonging to the LGBTI+ community. Through the NAP, Ireland commits to increasing the active and diverse participation and leadership of women in decision-making roles in political, economic and social life; in peace and security processes; and in humanitarian action.

***Action 25.2 Support the promotion of LGBTI+ rights in our multilateral work at the UN, EU and regional organisations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE including support for resolutions, statements and events that promote the rights of LGBTI+ people.***

Ireland actively supports efforts to uphold LGBTI+ rights at the United Nations, including in the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the UN General Assembly Third Committee. Ireland co-sponsors the HRC resolution on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) in which the UN condemns the ongoing violence and discrimination suffered by LGBTI+ individuals. At HRC45 in October 2020, Ireland was one of 33 signatory States to issue a joint statement to

promote and protect the rights of intersex people. At HRC44 in July 2020, in an Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on SOGI, Ireland reiterated our strong support for the mandate of the Independent Expert and outlined Ireland's commitment to creating a safe, fair and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ people. At UNGA75 Third Committee in October 2020, Ireland further reaffirmed our commitment to advocating for the rights of LGBTI+ people in an Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on SOGI. Ireland also regularly makes comments and recommendations on SOGI issues at the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). At the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR in January 2021, Ireland directed recommendations to three countries in this regard (Georgia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia).

At the European Union, Ireland contributes to initiatives aimed at increasing EU engagement in the promotion and protection LGBTI+ rights, and cooperates closely with like-minded EU Member States to ensure that the EU position on LGBTI+ rights remains strong and unequivocal. Ireland has welcomed the new EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025.

Ireland actively defends and promotes the rights of LGBTI+ persons throughout our work at the OSCE. In 2018, Ireland was one of 16 participating States to invoke the OSCE investigative Moscow Mechanism in respect of LBGT+ persons in the Republic of Chechnya.

At the Council of Europe, Ireland actively supports the inclusion of LGBTI+ perspectives in recommendations, declarations, decisions and statements. Ireland has provided annual financial support to the CoE SOGI Unit since 2015, and supports the work of relevant intergovernmental committees such as the Steering Committee on Diversity, Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion. The Representation assisted the SOGI Unit by chairing a panel discussion at the CoE online SOGI conference in October 2020, to mark the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. Ireland also observes closely the execution of judgments relating to LGBTI+ issues that are handed down by the European Court of Human Rights.

In 2019, Ireland joined the Equal Rights Coalition, an inter-governmental coalition of 42 countries dedicated to advancing the human rights of LGBTI+ persons and promoting inclusive development.

***Action 25.3 Support engagement with human rights and civil society organisations working globally and in partner countries to promote and protect the rights of LGBTI+ people.***

Ireland's international development policy, 'A Better World', launched in 2019, commits to supporting and protecting civil society space, and to focusing on the protection and promotion of human rights, including the rights of minorities.

Ireland's embassy network supports LGBTI+ civil society groups and organisations, participates in Pride Parades and civil society-led LGBTI+ events, and promotes LGBTI+ civil society's inclusion in events organised across the embassy network.

In 2019, the Department of Foreign Affairs began a new partnership with ILGA World, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, and will provide €750,000 over three years to support national level advancements in LGBTI+ rights. This will involve collecting reliable, evidence-based data on laws and attitudes towards LGBTI+ communities and producing relevant guides for Human Rights Defenders. The Department hosted a policy dialogue with ILGA World's Executive Director in October 2019.

The Department also provides support to Frontline Defenders through Irish Aid and through our Embassy network, for their work to protect Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), including LGBTI+ HRDs. In 2019, Department of Foreign Affairs funding supported the 'Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders', at which awards were presented to five LGBTI+ HRDs from Tunisia, the Dominican Republic, Russia, Indonesia and Malawi. Department support was also utilised for Frontline Defenders' Protection Grants Programme, which in turn provided support to LGBTI+ HRDs.

The Department also supports other human rights organisations whose work addresses LGBTI+ rights, including the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

***Action 25.4 Support outreach to LGBTI+ members of our diaspora through funding initiatives such as the Emigrant Support Programme.***

Ireland's new Diaspora Policy 2020-2025, 'Global Ireland', was launched in November 2020 and recognises the wide variety of people who make up our diaspora and their important ongoing contribution, both individually and collectively, to shaping our development and identity. Through this policy, Ireland has committed to continue supporting our LGBTQI diaspora through initiatives designed to promote inclusiveness, tolerance and respect for diversity (in line with COVID-19 restrictions internationally).

In line with our Diaspora Policy, Ireland's embassy network seeks to connect with the Irish diaspora in an inclusive way. Our embassies engage with LGBTI+ members of the diaspora in outreach to LGBTI+ organisations and societies across the globe, by participating in Pride Parades and similar events, and by promoting LGBTI+ members of the diaspora's participation in embassy network events.

Through the Emigrant Support Programme, the Department of Foreign Affairs has supported the 'St Pats for All' parade in New York and Irish participation in the NYC Pride parade. In Australia, the Department has supported the participation of 'Sydney Queer Irish' in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

The Department is also working with EPIC, the Museum of Irish Emigration in Dublin, on a project researching the experience of the Irish LGBTI+ Diaspora. This will form the basis of a travelling exhibition, commissioned by the Department (expected to launch in June 2021).

***Outcome 26: LGBTI+ people can travel in safety and confidence***

***Action 26.4 Continue to provide travel advice and information for Irish citizens when travelling abroad, particularly to countries where laws and attitudes to LGBTI+ issues may affect safety and ease of travel.***

The Department of Foreign Affairs' current travel advice remains to avoid all non-essential travel at this time. This is due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns and is reflected across our advice for all countries.

In line with Ireland's Consular Strategy, 'TravelWise: Staying safe and informed while travelling abroad', the Department of Foreign Affairs provides Irish people abroad with travel advice and consular assistance. Ireland's embassy network plays an important role in this regard.

The Department of Foreign Affairs provides specific advice to LGBTI+ individuals on its website, including practical information on 'Dos and Don'ts' for travelling abroad. The website and TravelWise app also highlight country-specific issues of particular relevance to LGBTI+ individuals, such as where attitudes to the LGBTI+ community may differ to Ireland or may cause concern.

The Department's Passport Services are also engaged in ensuring that services are provided to Irish people in a respectful and inclusive manner.

March 2021