

REGIONAL SEMINAR

“SHARING EXPERIENCES AND STORIES AMONG PARLIAMENTARIANS TO ADVANCE EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN”

SAN JOSÉ COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

On March 9-10, 2017, the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica hosted parliamentarians from Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago and LGBTI activists from Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, St. Lucia and Suriname to discuss the situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) persons in the Americas, as well as the stories and experiences of each country and community represented, and to encourage actions that promote equality and inclusion of LGBTI persons in their countries.

In his welcoming remarks, Diputado Ronny Monge, from Costa Rica and Co-Convenor of PGA’s Gender, Equality and Population Program, invited parliamentarians to consider, in collaboration with the LGBTI representative of their country, if present, a concrete and feasible action to take upon their return to Parliament and within three months of the Seminar. He exhorted participants to use the publication “Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People: a Handbook for Parliamentarians” (SOGI Handbook) as a resource to guide their deliberations.

During the closing session, parliamentarians announced their commitment to take the following actions:

PARLIAMENT OF ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

Senator Maureen Payne-Hyman expressed her appreciation for the invitation to attend the Seminar and the learning experience, and committed to:

1. As a member of the Gender Committee, advocate with her colleagues to include LGBTI issues, in addition to women’s and children’s issues, in the Committee’s agenda.
2. Submit a report to the President of the Senate about her participation in the Seminar highlighting the need to be more specific in the language employed in order to be more inclusive and hand him a copy of the SOGI Handbook.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BELIZE

Minister Elodio Aragon, Ministry of Home Affairs and Member of Parliament, committed to:

1. Establish open communication lines with LGBTI activists in Belize as it is important to listen to the LGBTI community and their concerns.

2. Share the information about the Seminar with Mr. Michael Peyrefitte, Attorney General of Belize and a PGA Member.
3. Sensitize parliamentarians and institutions that are in daily and constant contact with LGBTI persons such as the police, educators, and health professionals.

Mr. Orlando Habet, Member of Parliament, committed to:

1. Make a presentation to his political party's Executive and Parliamentary Caucus to share the information of the Seminar.
2. Share the information about the Seminar with Mr. Michael Peyrefitte, Attorney General of Belize and a PGA Member, and give him the final version of the SOGI Handbook.
3. Advance discussions on inclusion and non-discrimination regarding LGBTI people with MPs from both sides of the aisle, with the aim of hopefully passing hate crimes legislation.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF COSTA RICA

Dip. Marvin Atencio Delgado, Chair of PGA's National Group, committed to:

- Disseminate the SOGI Handbook to all 57 Costa Rican Deputies in the Legislative Assembly and advocate for the importance of addressing LGBTI issues to prevent this important tool from being just stored in drawers.

Dip. Franklin Corella Vargas committed to:

- Strengthen public spaces for dialogue and position LGBTI rights and human rights in the political agenda.

Dip. Ronny Monge Salas, Co-Convenor of PGA's Gender, Equality and Population Program, committed to:

1. Continue holding meetings with LGBTI activists and elaborate a clear timeframe and agenda with scheduled dates for these meetings.
2. According to the Assembly's regulations, introduce motions so that the projects of law on Gender Identity and Marriage Equality are moved to the first item of the legislative agenda.
3. Endorse the legal cases relevant to this agenda that are currently before the Inter American Court for Human Rights.
4. Encourage the evaluation of programs to learn their impact.

CONGRESS OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Senator Julio César Valentín, Chair of PGA's National Group, and *Dip. Gloria Reyes*, committed to:

1. Request information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about a consultation process to deepen commitments and policies in relation to international treaties on human rights, which in Dominican Republic have constitutional standing.
2. Invite the Executive's Legal Counsel and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to address Congress about the status of the National Plan on Human Rights.
3. Convene a discussion table or a workshop with legislators to increase their participation and cross-party representation in addressing LGBTI issues and learn from and disseminate the SOGI Handbook.
4. Facilitate a meeting between legislators and LGBTI activists to encourage an open dialogue and exchange of information.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SURINAME

Ms. Grace Watamaleo, Member of Parliament, committed to:

1. Strengthen the knowledge and awareness about LGBTI rights among her colleagues as only two political parties have begun conversations with civil society representatives on this topic.
2. Cooperate with the Commission of Human Rights, the Ministry of Justice and Police, and the Parliamentary Commission of Health.

PARLIAMENT OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Senator Wade Mark, Chair of PGA's National Group, committed to:

1. In collaboration with colleagues, pursue legislative amendments to extend protections against discrimination in the Equal Opportunity Act to include sexual orientation, HIV status and age.
2. Follow up with the Attorney General on a convened meeting to amend the Equal Opportunity Act and ensure that in short order these amendments are brought forward. Senator Mark expressed that if this Act is amended, then the government will have to repeal the buggery laws.
3. Pose a parliamentary question to Prime Minister Keith Rowley on his stance and his government's policies on LGBTI issues.

4. Build and advance awareness among colleagues by ensuring that each of the 41 members of the House of Representatives and of the 31 Senators receives a copy of the SOGI Handbook in electronic format.

Agreed on March 10, 2017 in San José, Costa Rica