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Press Release

.../for immediate release

EU celebrates International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) by supporting LGBTI equality and rights in Southern Africa

The European Union is at the forefront of efforts to address discrimination based on sexual orientation and on gender identity. During the video-launch of the “Out & Proud: LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa project” launch the EU Ambassador to South Africa, Dr Riina Kionka, said: “I’m happy to announce that, coinciding with IDAHOT 2020, and in view of the looming Covid-19 health crisis and its impact on vulnerable groups, the EU has decided to step up its support to LGBTI communities in Southern Africa by providing some €2 million (just under R40 million) for this project, which seeks to strengthen the capacities of LGBTI Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society Organisations in Malawi, Eswatini and Zimbabwe”.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU on 17 May, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, highlights the potential of human rights violations against LGBTI individuals and communities within the region.

Globally, entire societies are under lockdown in an effort to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from spiraling out of control. In many parts of the world, incl. in Southern Africa, LGBTI persons will be disproportionately affected by the crisis as discriminatory laws and negative social attitudes deny them access to health care. In effect, the non-recognition of trans and intersex identities not only leads to stigmatisation and marginalisation, but multiplies the challenges for LGBTI individuals/ communities to access health services, and so, in turn, increases their vulnerability to COVID-19. Further, many LGBTI persons face discrimination and abuse at the hands of the family members they find themselves locked down with.

In South Africa specifically, the EU supports a number of other LGBTI actions with both Government and Civil Society: 1) support to the National Task Team on LGBTI; 2) Support to three organisations working on the rights of LGBTI people (HIVOS, Lifeline, Iranti); 3) An exchange of best practices between Europe and South Africa on public policies and legislation regarding the rights of Transgender and Intersex persons (CSO Iranti and Department of Justice). This adds to a number of other actions that EU Countries present in South Africa undertake in support of LGBTI groups.

For more information please contact the EU Press contact: Frank.oberholzer@eeas.europa.eu

Background

The Out & Proud project is funded under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), a mechanism that the EU uses to support human rights worldwide. The project, led by the Johannesburg-based Southern Africa Litigation Centre, is aligned to the objectives of the EIDHR to support vulnerable and discriminated against groups in situations where they are most at risk.

Under the EIDHR 2018-2019 global allocation, the Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC) was awarded a grant, *Out & Proud: LGBTI Equality and Rights in Southern Africa*. The project has a regional dimension and actions in three countries (Malawi, Zimbabwe and Eswatini).

