

**Podgorica, 27/08/2011**

**NGOs do not participate at the conference "Towards Europe - Towards Equality"**

The Government of Montenegro (the Government) organize from 2 to 5 September this year an international conference and training entitled "Towards Europe - Towards Equality". The undersigned organizations will not take part at this conference. In this way, we further protest against the relation of the Government towards domestic civil society and the lack of track record in improvement of the situation of LGBT population.

In recent years, civil society and independent media have been extremely committed to LGBT rights. The Government's decision to ignore the civil sector when designing policies or activities aiming to improve the situation of LGBT persons raised additional concerns. In particular, we are taking into account that the Government has not adopted the initiated Action Plan to combat homophobia (AP) developed by the Coalition "Together for LGBT Rights", in whose drafting representatives of its ministries also took part. AP, proposed in April this year, is fully in compliance with the Recommendation CM / Rec (2010) 5 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states on measures to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Instead of initiating the work on implementing all or at least some of the proposed measures, the Government convenes a three-days long conference in which are to be re-discussed topics that should be already widely implemented.

We remind that during this year NGOs have organized several international and national events in which the situation of LGBT population was carefully considered and the position of the LGBT persons assessed. These events addressed to the accurate and constructive recommendations that the Government has not seriously considered.

Measure of the resistance of the Government to provide equal opportunities for the discriminated minority in our society is reflected in the fact that the acknowledgement of many of these recommendations did not require additional resources, but only the expression of political will which was lacking.

During this year, it was not possible to register the facts that will point to the visible results of the state in establishing a sustainable antidiscrimination policy and practice of improving the human rights of LGBT persons. On the other hand, there are numerous examples in which the Government failed to support argument based needs and requirements. We remind that until this moment the Government has not adopted any strategic decision aimed at improving the position of LGBT population, despite the fact that several frameworks were offered on multiple occasion. The Government refused to appoint the appropriate political level of its representative in the Organization Committee of the Pride Parade who would take part and address the participants of Pride after the walk. Police did not identify who endangered 600 participants of the organized concert marking the International Day Against Homophobia. Prosecutor's Office has not prosecuted numerous examples of violence against LGBT population and activists. For already a year legal proceedings against discrimination are pending even though the law treats these as priority.

Not a single textbook, although new edition is developed this year, has any sentence about the existence of LGBT rights and LGBT persons. There was also no support to a number of LGBT initiatives and programmes.

In the work of the Government continues to work the Minister for Human and Minority Rights who has repeatedly refused to affirm sexual minorities, contrary to the standards and recommendations of the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Our decision not to participate at this conference, as previously at the trainings organized by the Ministry of Human Rights, prepared by the principle of discrimination of prominent experts and activists for LGBT rights in Montenegro, is nothing but a reminder that the government needs to fulfill the obligations and promises to LGBT population, domestic and international standards and the international community to urgently concrete acts that demonstrate the readiness of the real improvement of difficult position of LGBT persons in Montenegro.

We note that the Conference and training represent the third phase of Government's operation for obtaining the positive opinion of the EC, upon the formation of the Council for Fight against Discrimination and appointment of special advisers against discrimination. It is obvious that in just one month, the Government is trying to demonstrate the political will before the international community without real concern for the discriminated group followed with the total absence of communication with them.

Our strong and intensive cooperation will be possible after the Government does the following:

1. Replace the Minister of Human and Minority Rights Ferhat Dinosa;
2. Adopts the Action plan against homophobia on the basis of the draft created by the coalition "Together for LGBT Rights" and provide the conditions necessary for its implementation in cooperation with the NGO sector;
3. Provide political support for the organization of "Pride Parade" and meet the requirements for its organization (ensuring participation in the Pride and public speech of the Minister, Deputy Prime Minister or Prime Minister);
4. Establish institutional cooperation with NGOs involved in protecting the rights of LGBT people in Montenegro and provide assistance to their work;
5. Prosecute and punish all examples of violence and hatred against LGBT population and disruption of social life of the LGBT community.

Under these conditions, we publicly reaffirm our commitment to provide full support and partnership with the Government. The undersigned NGOs want principle based, effective and strategic-oriented cooperation, and refuse to help ignorance of the fact, postponing of the decision and covering up the actual state of affairs for the sake of getting the date of negotiations.

**Statement signed by:**

1. For the **"LGBT Forum Progress"** - Zdravko Cimbalevic, Executive Director
2. For **"Juventas"** - Ivana Vujovic, President of the Board of Directors
3. For the **"Centre for Civic Education"** - Daliborka Uljarevic, Executive Director
4. For the **"Montenegrin Women's Lobby"** - Aida Petrovic, Coordinator
5. For the **SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Podgorica** - Biljana Zekovic, Executive Director
6. For the **"Human Rights Action"** - Tea Gorjanc Prelevic, Executive Director
7. For the "Centre for Anti-discrimination"**EQUISTA** - Milan Saranovic, Director
8. For **"Expeditio"** Kotor - Biljana Gligoric, Executive Director
9. For the **"Centre for Development of NGOs"** - Ana Novakovic, executive Director
10. For the **"Shelter"** - Ljiljana Raicevic, Director
11. For the **"Monitoring Center"** - Mr. Zlatko Vujovic, President of the Board of Directors
12. For the **SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Niksic** – Natasa Medjedovic, Main coordinator
13. For the **"Institute Alternative"** - Stevo Muk, President of the Board of Directors
14. For **"Center for women and peace education ANIMA"** Kotor – Ljupka Kovacevic, Coordinator
15. For the **"European Movement in Montenegro"** - Momcilo Radulovic, Secretary General
16. For the **"Montenegrin Alternative Culture"** - Maja Bakic, Executive Director
17. For the **"Roma Scholarship Foundation – Institute of Social Inclusion"** - Biljana Alkovic, Director
18. For the **"Libertask"**, Neda Sindik, Director
19. For the **"Youthinfo Montenegro"**, Milica Zigic, Director
20. For the **„Forum MNE“** – Elvira Hadzibegovic – Bubanja, Director
21. For the **„Prima“** – Aida Perović, Executive Director
22. For the **„Eco Movement“**, Nikola Čabarkapa
23. For the **„CAZAS“**, Miso Pejkovic, Executive Director
24. For the **„Montenegrin Youth Forum“**, Podgorica (network)
25. For the **„Centre for Democracy and Human Rights“** (CEDEM), Nenad Koprivica, executive director
26. For the **ADP „ZID“**, Igor Milosevic, Executive director

**Organizations from the region, Europe and Turkey that have supported our initiative and requests:**

1. **"Queer Zagreb"**, Gordan Bosanac - Croatia
2. **"qSPORT"**, Zeljko Blaće - Croatia
3. **"Zagreb Pride"** – Croatia
4. **Center for LGBT Equality** – Marko Jurcic, Croatia
5. **"Green list"**, (political party) – Croatia
6. Lesbian organization Rijeka „**LORI**“, Danijela Almesberger, Coordinator
7. **"Queeria Center"**, Boban Stojanovic – Serbia
8. „**Women in Black**“, Staša Zajović - Serbia
9. Lesbian Human Rights Organization "**Labris**", Jovanka Todorovic - Serbia
10. Lesbian organisation from Novi Sad "**NLO**", Biljana Stanković Lori – Serbia
11. **"Women's Studies and Research Center"**, Dragana Todorovic – Serbia
12. **"Lezbicna Sekcija SKUC-LL"**, dr. Tatjana Greif, koordinatorica - Slovenia
13. **"Association Q"**, Svetlana Durković - Bosnia & Herzegovina
14. **"Okvir"** (Frame), Alma Midžić - Bosnia & Herzegovina
15. **"Civil Action"** – Bosnia & Herzegovina
16. **"PEL"**, Association for progress, education and lobbying – Andrijana Steriova – Macedonia
17. LGBT organization "**LABRYS**" - Liliya Ten, Head of advocacy department - Kyrgyz Republic
18. **"KAOS GL"** – Nevin Öztop, Vice President - Turkey
19. **"Athens Pride"** - Andrea Gilbert, Spokesperson - Greece
20. **"Rakurs"** - Vinnichenko Tatiana, The Chairman of Board – Russia
21. **"Russian LGBT-Network"**, Valery Sozaev, Advocacy Manager – Russia
22. **"Russian LGBT Sport Federation"** - Konstantin Yablotski, President – Russia
23. LGBT organization "**Vykhod**" (Coming Out), Igor Kochetkov, Director – Russia
24. „**Aleanca**“ The Alliance Against Discrimination of LGBT – Xeni Karaj, Executive Director - Albania
25. **"Pink Embassy"** - Altin Hazizaj, Director - Albania
26. The Association **"For the integration of people with disabilities"**, Ina Cenko – Albania