

Canadian Civil Society Organizations Welcome New Commitment from Government of Canada to Support LGBTI Rights Globally following the Equal Rights Coalition Global Conference in Vancouver

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Vancouver, August 7, 2018 – Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs), along with hundreds of LGBTI activists from around the world, came together over the last three days (Aug. 5 -7) for the [Equal Rights Coalition](#) (ERC) Global Conference, hosted by Canada in Vancouver. At the conference, CSOs aimed to shine light on LGBTI rights internationally, build networks, share knowledge, and gain support – both financial support and concrete government actions – for the work that is being done around the world to advance the rights of LGBTI people.

Following a number of advances, promising conversations, and advocacy by the [Dignity Network](#), a network which brings together more than 20 Canadian civil society organizations to advocate for the rights of LGBTI people in Canada and around the world, **the Government of Canada has committed, both financially and through concrete actions, to strengthen human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people around the world.**

Earlier today, **Randy Boissonnault**, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Canada on LGBTQ2 Issues, addressed a crowd from **75 countries** including member states, donors, and activists to announce a commitment from Canada to advance the rights of LGBTI people around the world through:

- C\$1 million in new funding for LGBTI CSOs in conflict zones;
- A commitment to update the [Voices at Risk](#) guidelines to support human rights defenders;
- A meeting with CSOs on September 17, 2018 to identify mechanisms to address domestic and international LGBTI issues; and
- In the same meeting, the Canadian government will also address additional domestic and international needs of CSOs to continue their work to advance LGBTI rights.

“As both the co-chair country and co-host of the Equal Rights Coalition Global Conference with Chile, Canada’s announcement is a welcome step forward but more is needed and Canada is certainly capable of more. We continue to press Canada to both assert and demonstrate leadership with respect to LGBTI rights around the world, through concrete and bold action,” said **Kim Vance, Executive Director of ARC International**, a Dignity Network Steering Committee member.

Ahead of the ERC Global Conference, the [Dignity Network called on the Government of Canada to advance human rights protections for LGBTI people around the world](#). The network of Canadian civil society organizations is pleased that Canada has met some of their key demands.

“We asked Canada to commit new funding to support global LGBTI human rights work, to help open spaces to LGBTI refugees, to articulate the placement of LGBTI rights

within Canada's foreign policy, to update Canada's guidelines on supporting human rights defenders, and to make a long-term commitment to the Equal Rights Coalition," said **Kimahi Powell, Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad**, a Dignity Network Steering Committee member. "We fully welcome the commitments that the Government of Canada has made here today and look forward to next steps."

"In the coming months we are eager to see the real and urgently needed commitments from Canada begin to take shape. Today, our government affirmed for us that Canada is supportive of our work to advance LGBTI issues around the world and we look forward to further discussions," said **Doug Kerr, Dignity Network Steering Committee member**.

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BACKGROUND:

The [Equal Rights Coalition](#) (ERC) is the first intergovernmental coalition, with 39 member states including co-chairs Canada and Chile, dedicated to the protection of the rights of LGBTI people around the world. The theme of this year's Global Conference is [Leaving No One Behind](#), and it brings together states, development cooperation agencies, civil society organizations, private donors, and other relevant stakeholders to advance LGBTI human rights and inclusive development around the world. This is the first time that Canada has hosted a Global Summit of the ERC.