



EASTERN CARIBBEAN ALLIANCE FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

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For immediate release

## **ECADE welcomes new IACHR commissioners notes Caribbean States' reservations on human rights**

(Castries, June 22, 2017) On the heels of the 47th General Assembly of the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc. (ECADE) welcomes several positive decisions coming out of the meeting. ECADE notes however, reservations expressed by eastern Caribbean governments in respect of the Resolution on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights. The 2017 assembly was hosted in Cancun, Mexico from June 19 - 21, 2017.

Of note is the adoption of the omnibus Resolution on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights; the election of three new commissioners to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); and the decision to double the regular funds assigned to the IACHR and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on women.

“There is clearly a recognition among the majority of OAS members of the need to strengthen mechanisms to investigate human rights violations, secure justice for survivors of violence and others facing discrimination and ensure the protection of all peoples of the Caribbean,” says ECADE’s Communications and Advocacy Officer Maria Fontenelle, who represented the organisation at the OAS Assembly. “From conflicts in Venezuela and Brazil to human rights violations of marginalised groups in Barbados and Dominica, the IACHR has its work cut out for it.”

The new Commissioners elected to the IACHR are Joel Hernández García of México, Flávia Cristina Pivovan of Brazil and Antonia Urrejola Noguera of Chile. ECADE’s member organisations will seek to engage the IACHR to bring attention in the region to the discrimination against citizens based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex characteristics. This was notably addressed in the 2015 IACHR regional [report](#) on violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons or those perceived as LGBTI. The report, notes the IACHR, recognises “there are still high rates of violence in all countries of the region...this violence tends to be extremely brutal and cruel. Moreover, the everyday violence that affects LGBTI persons is often invisible, as it is not reported to the authorities or covered by the media.”

In light of this, ECADE, and the LGBTTTI Coalition at the OAS, is pleased with the adoption of the Resolution on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights but concerned about reservations by countries that include the eastern Caribbean nations of Dominica, Saint Lucia and Barbados. While it includes important provisions that strengthen the protection of the rights of all people, our governments missed the opportunity to firmly position themselves as leaders on human rights.

ECADE calls on member states to clarify conflicting messages used to deny the protection of all citizens. The claim that it is impossible to commit to the Resolution as many of the terms used are not defined under international agreements and resolutions is in direct conflict to the stated decision to reserve the right to define discrimination according to our culture and our values.

We remind Caribbean governments of the commitments enshrined in all our constitutions that reaffirms equality of all persons, prohibits discrimination and recognises and protects the full human rights of all citizens. These are the stated values of our people that our governments are bound to fulfil for citizens at home. We further note that culture is not static or homogeneous.

The OAS is united in the conviction that the human rights of all persons are universal and indivisible. We remind Caribbean governments that they have voluntarily committed to this as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”

and “All are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to equal protection of the law”.

Having noted that governments are commitment to protect the rights of children as stated in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, we remind that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations; particularly in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. This includes protection from bullying; the right to education free from discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity and free of teachings of hatred and intolerance.

As Caribbean States seek to ensure protection for all families, we join in encouraging the necessary protection and assistance to allow all families to fulfil their responsibilities within the community. We note that this includes the families of LGBTQI people, which are often ripped apart by societal stigma fuelled by criminalisation.

We agree that “no person should be subject to violence, attack or persecution for any reason” and remind our governments that when they fail to fully commit to the protection and promotion of human rights of all citizens, the consequence *is* violence and persecution.

ECADE recognises the countries that, through their unreserved support of the resolution, ensure the OAS honours its own values. We welcome the contribution of the government of Canada of almost \$2 million to combatting discrimination and violence against women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ECADE members commit to continuing to work with the Equal Rights Coalition, a new inter-governmental forum committed to promoting and protecting LGBTI rights, as well as the LGBTI Core Group as we seek to advance policy that will improve the quality of life of all people of the eastern Caribbean.

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**Click the links below for more information on representation at 47th OAS General Assembly**

1. [Declaration of the Coalition LGBTTTI: Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law](#)
2. [Coalition on Sexual and Reproductive Rights](#)
3. [List of Chiefs of Delegation to the 47 General Assembly in Mexico](#)
4. [2017 OAS General Assembly Third Plenary Session and Closing Session](#)

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**The Organisation of American States (OAS)** is the world’s oldest regional organisation, established to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote solidarity, to strengthen collaboration, and to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of member states. The independent countries of the eastern Caribbean are among thirty-five (35) in the Americas that have voluntarily ratified the [OAS Charter](#) and are members of the Organisation.

**The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc. (ECADE)** is a network of organisations working across the eastern Caribbean. ECADE works to increase the competence of activists and increase knowledge and awareness of the people of the eastern Caribbean for the advancement of LGBTQI and marginalised populations in the region. Learn more at [www.ecequality.org](http://www.ecequality.org) or email [info@ecequality.org](mailto:info@ecequality.org)