



**Ministry for Foreign Affairs**

*Minister for Foreign Affairs*

To the Participants at  
Mobilizing Civil Society against Intolerance seminar:  
The Struggle against Discrimination and Intolerance Based on a Person's  
Sexual Orientation

23 February 2006  
Riga Graduate School of Law

Organized by  
Latvian Centre for Human Rights  
with the financial support of the Embassy of Canada in Riga

Respect – in word and action – for the equal value and rights of all people, including the right not to be subjected to discrimination and other offensive treatment, violence or threat of violence, based on sexual orientation, is a human right and not some negotiable benefit. It is also one of the fundamental legal principles that form the basis of EU cooperation.

Human rights are universal and indivisible. Regardless of the general cultural and social differences between countries, we are all responsible for defending these rights, in accordance with the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights of 1993, whether they be the rights of gays, lesbians and bisexuals, or women, children or ethnic minorities.

Civil society has a very important role to play as watchdog and driving force in bringing about lasting change for the better, in defence of these principles that are so fundamental to every democratic state. However, measures undertaken by non-governmental organisations must also be supported by official society. This applies not least to the issue of working to improve the situation of young gays, lesbians and bisexuals, who are often particularly vulnerable. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we are all responsible for ensuring that young gays, lesbians and bisexuals have access

to the information and support necessary for them to be able to live securely in accordance with their sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>

Sweden will continue to be active in work to counteract discrimination and other forms of intolerance, also when connected with sexual orientation. Sweden assumes as well that other EU member states will do the same, in accordance with the principles on which Community cooperation is based.



Laila Freivalds

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child*: 'In the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee requires that legislation protect children against discrimination based on sexual orientation, and to address disparities in the minimum legal ages for heterosexual and homosexual relationships/age of consent.' (UK – Isle of Man – 26 June 2000 and Periodic Report of Austria). 'The Committee is concerned that homosexual [...] young people do not have access to the appropriate information, support and necessary protection to enable them to live their sexual orientation.' (UK, 9 October 2002 and, for example, General Comment no. 3, CRC/GC/2003/3, 17 March 2003 and General Comment no. 4, CRC/GC/2003/4, 1 July 2003).