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**From:** UNHC  
**Sent:** Friday, 30 September 2022 1:00 pm  
**To:** ALL POSTS (FM); ALL DIVISIONS (FM)  
**Cc:** OCE; DS MLG; FM.DPMC (FPA) (Seemail); FM.P/S MFA (Seemail); FM.Justice Ministry (Seemail); FM.Social Development (Seemail); FM.Maori Dev TPK (Seemail); FM.Min for Women (Seemail)  
**Subject:** Human Rights: Equal Rights Coalition Global LGBTI Conference - Buenos Aires 8-9 September 2022

**Security Classification:**  
UNCLASSIFIED

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#### **Tohutohu kawē - Handling instructions**

Justice: attn. Crooke, Kerpen, Johnston  
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#### **Rāpopoto - Summary**

After a four year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) Global LGBTI Conference was held in Buenos Aires 8-9 September, co-hosted by outgoing ERC Chairs Argentina and the United Kingdom.

Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific)/Tuia Tangata, Louisa Wall, led Aotearoa New Zealand's participation in the conference, deepening relationships with key partners in international LGBTQI+ rights, and engaging with local civil society groups working to advance LGBTQI+ and indigenous rights.

Interest in Aotearoa New Zealand was high, given our strong support and commitment to concrete advancements in LGBTQI+ rights and inclusion both at home and globally. Partners appreciated our focus on the Pacific region and the insights and connections we bring to the table. As one of only five envoys worldwide with a specific mandate for LGBTQI+ issues (alongside Argentina, Italy, UK, and US), Ambassador Wall was able to provide a strong and authentic perspective as a key player in New Zealand's own gender and LGBTQI+ rights journey.

#### **Hohenga - Action**

Hei titiro māu - For information.

#### **Pūrongo - Report**

Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific)/Tuia Tangata and UM UNHC Rachel Bennett visited Buenos Aires to attend the (normally) biennial Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) Global LGBTI Conference, 8-9 September. The ERC is a grouping of 42 member states and 30 civil society organisations (CSOs) and multilateral partners, dedicated to the protection of the rights of LGBTQI+ people around the world. New Zealand joined the ERC as a founding member in 2016, and has attend all three of its conferences at a senior official level since.

2 Ambassador Wall delivered the New Zealand intervention at the Member State pledging session, at which states reaffirmed their commitments to the ERC and advancement of LGBTQI+ equality and human rights. Ambassador Wall also participated in a panel on *“Integrating LGBTQI+ work across Government: Voices from Member States and CSOs”* alongside the US and Italian Special Envoys.

3 In the margins of the conference Ambassador Wall held bilateral meetings and informal pull-asides with the United Kingdom (Lord Nick Herbert, Prime Minister’s Special Envoy on LGBT+ rights), the United States (Jessica Stern, President Biden’s Special Envoy for LGBTQI+ rights), Argentina (Special Representative - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Alba Rueda), Italy (Fabrizio Petri, Special Envoy LGBTQI+ rights), the Netherlands (Dr Bahia Thazib-lie, Human Rights Ambassador), Australia (MaryEllen Miller, DFAT Assistant Secretary Human Rights Policy and Social Inclusion), and the UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI), Victor Madrigal-Borloz.

4 Key areas discussed during Ambassador Wall’s meetings included a push for greater cooperation and engagement between Special Envoys/Ambassadors for LGBTQI+ rights; a need for enhanced practical coordination of our respective efforts and support for work towards decriminalisation; arrangements for World Pride Sydney 2023 and how the group of Special Envoys/Ambassadors might participate; and opportunities for greater engagement on LGBTQI+ issues in the Pacific. IE SOGI Madrigal-Borloz also shared his plans for forthcoming thematic papers and regional visits before his term concludes in October 2023, and underscored the importance of the nominations and appointment process for a new Independent Expert reflecting and respecting diversity in all its forms.

5 Ambassador Wall also took the opportunity to engage in the margins of the conference with a range of parliamentarians including Rob Oliphant (Canadian Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs), members of the parliamentary Global Equality Caucus, and CSOs such as Stonewall, Kalaidoscope, ILGA World (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), and Fundación Arcoiris (Mexico).

6 In a range of settings, Ambassador Wall highlighted the participation and important work of our Pacific partners attending the conference: Isikele Vulavou, CEO of the Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network (PSGDN), whom she invited to speak from the floor during her panel discussion; and Ken Moala of ILGA Oceania. New Zealand signed a three year funding partnership with PSGDN in 2021, and is partnering with ILGA Oceania to strengthen the network of civil society organisations across the Pacific region.

### *Conference themes*

7 Progress has been made in recent years, including the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex acts in six additional countries (with several more anticipated to do the same by the end of 2022). However, conference discussions highlighted that progress is far from universal or consistent, with 69 countries yet to decriminalise, and growing evidence of movements that seek to undermine the freedoms and human rights of LGBTIQ+ persons. Human rights abuses and violations are increasing, including discrimination, violence and arbitrary arrests, based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). Several actors, including states, are using narratives which appeal to “traditional values” and cultural divisions to justify new anti-LGBTIQ+ legislation, often referred to as the global anti-gender movement (see [background paper](#)).

8 Discussions highlighted the disproportionate humanitarian impact of armed conflict and other crises on groups in vulnerable situations, including LGBTIQ+ persons. Addressing the needs of LGBTIQ+ people within broader humanitarian responses is seen as critical to effective recovery and resilience against future crises. The disproportionate impact of armed conflict on LGBTIQ+ communities will be the focus of the next thematic paper to be presented by IE SOGI Victor Madrigal-Borloz to the UN in late October.

9 Other themes explored during the conference included the heightened vulnerability of indigenous LGBTIQ+ people; the disproportionate impact of climate disasters on already marginalised LGBTIQ+ people; discrimination against trans women in sport; and the role of (religious) colonisation in the suppression of traditional acceptance of LGBTIQ+ identities in many countries.

10 During the conference, the Council for Global Equality presented [scorecards](#) of core human rights protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals in each ERC member state (based on 2020 data), highlighting that leadership begins at home, and domestic progress advances global progress. [New Zealand](#) was given an overall score of 70% or “fair”. Australia scored 67%, Canada 87%, the UK 73%, and the US 50%. Within New Zealand’s overall score, we were assessed at 80% (“good”) for basic human rights and socio-economic rights, but only 50% (“failing”) for protection from violence. The latter score would improve significantly if New Zealand’s hate crimes legislation included gender identity, and hate speech laws included sexual orientation and gender identity. Scorecards will be updated at the end of 2022 to reflect advances over the past two years and it will be important to engage on the Council’s request for information to ensure key areas of progress are captured, including New Zealand’s Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Act 2022.

#### *Future action*

11 Looking forward, conference participants discussed ways to further strengthen coordination and the work of the ERC, including: rapid focus and action (e.g. statements, lobbying) on individual cases of abuse; building the evidence base of key issues that contribute to violence against LGBTIQ+ people; prioritising and coordinating efforts towards decriminalisation (in which the ERC International Diplomacy Working Group plays a key role); strengthening support for CSOs, human rights defenders and community leaders (particularly through much needed funding); providing technical advice and capacity building to support legislative and policy change; and the forthcoming establishment of a dedicated ERC administrative unit to support the work of member states.

12 Participants also discussed the importance of working to bring new voices into the ERC, particularly those from the Global South, and in this regard highlighted the comparative lack of ERC members from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.

13 At the conclusion of the conference, outgoing co-chairs Argentina and the United Kingdom issued a detailed [joint statement](#), and Germany and Mexico assumed the ERC co-chair role for the next two-year period.

#### *Local engagement*

14 Following the conference, Argentine Special Representative Alba Rueda organised a day of engagements for Ambassador Wall with local LGBTQI+ CSOs and representatives of Argentina's indigenous communities. Local organisations noted areas of progress achieved in Argentina's protection of civil and labour rights for members of the LGBTQI+ community, but highlighted gaps in the exercise of these rights, and ongoing marginalisation and violence against LGBTQI+ people. Indigenous representatives commented on the lack of data collected about the existence and needs of LGBTQI+ people within indigenous communities, and their heightened vulnerabilities and exposure to violence.

#### **Tākapu - Comment**

15 The ERC conference was a significant opportunity to engage with a wide range of key government partners and CSO stakeholders. It was clear from discussions that New Zealand's contribution to the advancement of LGBTQI+ rights globally, and our action domestically, are seen as authentic and credible. Domestic legislative reforms undertaken in recent years demonstrate clear commitment to the ERC's objectives, and the insight and experience we can bring on engaging with the Pacific are valued and respected by important likeminded partners.

#### **Mutu - End**