

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS applauds the vote by Bhutan’s parliament to repeal laws that criminalize and discriminate against LGBT people

GENEVA, 14 December 2020—UNAIDS congratulates Bhutan’s parliament on voting to repeal Sections 213 and 214 of the country’s Penal Code. Those provisions criminalized certain private sexual acts and led to discrimination against and the marginalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The country’s parliament voted for the repeal on Human Rights Day, 10 December.

“I commend Bhutan’s parliamentarians for voting to create a more compassionate, tolerant and inclusive society and for recognizing that the country’s LGBT people deserve privacy, respect and dignity,” said Winnie Byanyima, UNAIDS Executive Director. “This step taken on Human Rights Day will also help to ensure that LGBT people in Bhutan receive the essential services they need, including HIV treatment, prevention and care services.”

Bhutan becomes the latest country to vote to decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations. Since 2014, Angola, Botswana, Gabon, India, Mozambique, Nauru, Palau, the Seychelles and Trinidad and Tobago have all taken the same measure. However, consensual same-sex sexual relations remain criminalized in at least 68 countries and territories worldwide.

Criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual relations prevents people from accessing and using HIV prevention, testing and treatment services and increases their risk of acquiring HIV. It legitimizes stigma, discrimination and violence against LGBT people and is a human rights violation.

Globally, the risk of acquiring HIV is 26 times higher among gay men and other men who have sex with men than among the general population and 13 times higher for transgender people. Prohibitive legal and policy environments and a lack of tailored services for key populations increase their vulnerability to HIV. UNAIDS urges countries to ensure the full respect of the human rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, through repealing laws that prohibit sex between consenting adults in private, enforcing laws to protect people from violence and discrimination, addressing homophobia and transphobia and ensuring that crucial health services are made available.

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The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely

with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.