Thank you, Mr President,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a cross-regional group of Non-Governmental Organisations composed by International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana (YHFG), the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), the Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition (SRJC), the Association for Prevention of Septic Abortion (BAPSA), Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu), Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV & AIDS (KELIN), Equality Movement Georgia (EM), Women Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG), Associação Lambda Moçambique (AL) and the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU).

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz, as the Independent Expert, and celebrate his instant engagement in cross-regional and multi-stakeholder activities included in his report. The outcomes of these activities, together with the overview of the developments taking place at the global, but particularly at the regional and national level confirm the universal character of the prohibition of violence and discrimination, as basic human rights principles under international law.

Unfortunately, the most basic and universally agreed human rights are sometimes the most difficult to uphold. Despite international law, too many are still exposed to violence, discrimination and exclusion because of their religion, nationality, skin colour, opinion and an endless list of old and new reasons. Like them, the combination of social prejudice, stigma, exclusion and criminalisation also deprive lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender non-conforming persons from their inherent rights and dignity, from their social and family networks and also from essential services, including health, education, employment, housing and access to justice.

The conviction agreed upon by all Member States that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” is not only the cornerstone of the universal human rights system, but also the foundation of the 2030 Agenda of “leaving no one behind”.

As pointed out by the report, legal reform is just one among a plethora of actions that can and must be adopted for eradicating violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. We are convinced that most of those actions start by
showing political will and increased learning. In this regard, we encourage states to extend invitations to the Independent Expert to conduct country visits, as a way of adding value to the political will evidenced in the increasing acceptance of relevant UPR recommendations.

I thank you,