



COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



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MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER THOMAS HAMMARBERG

**Roundtable “The Defense of Morality or a Violation of Human Rights?”
Archangel, 20 and 21 September 2011**

Dear participants,

I have been informed about your Roundtable on the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and invited to send this greeting. As you know, I have recently published the report “Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe”. This report is a tool for my ongoing dialogue with the authorities of all Council of Europe member states.

One concern in the report relates to initiatives in a few member states of the Council of Europe aimed at preventing an organisation or an individual to promote what is described as “promoting homosexuality”. Such initiatives which would potentially prohibit a wide range of activities, such as public demonstrations, speeches and events on LGBT human rights as well as provision of information about or to LGBT people.

It is important that all member states of the Council of Europe safeguard the possibility to receive and impart information on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the press, publications, oral and written statements, art and other media. Any discriminatory provision criminalising the dissemination and diffusion of factual information concerning sexual orientation and gender identity should be abolished.

It is also essential that the right to freedom of assembly of LGBT persons be respected and that misuse of legal or administrative provisions in order to hinder the organisation of such events should be prevented.

I hope my report will be of value for your important discussions with civil society actors, human rights experts and regional deputies. You will find a copy attached in English – a translation in Russian will soon be issued.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Hammarberg