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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Rt Hon Nick Herbert, CBE, MP
House of Commons
London
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8th December 2016

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter of 19 October. It was a real pleasure to be able to address the AGM of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGB&T Rights on 22 November. Thank you for your kind invitation; I enjoyed the opportunity to hear more about your plans and priorities.

As I said when we met, I am struck by the genuinely cross-party approach to the work of the APPG and on LGB&T equality more generally. When I discuss LGB&T rights with other governments on my visits overseas, it strengthens my hand enormously to be able to highlight the positive example set by the UK Parliament.

I very much welcome the report of the APPG and its many sensible recommendations. FCO officials are already working with support from UK civil society organisations - including Stonewall - to update the toolkit that UK overseas missions use to guide their work to protect and promote LGB&T rights; and I recently met with the new UK Alliance for Global Equality to discuss what more we can do collectively to address LGB&T rights globally.

We work particularly closely with civil society organisations on this issue. Given the sensitivity which can exist around this issue our approach to LGB&T rights in each country is strongly guided by local partners.

Approximately £900,000 of support to LGB&T projects is being provided by the FCO's Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy. I am delighted that you were personally able to attend one of the workshops organised by Stonewall bringing Human Rights Defenders from LGB&T rights organisations in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus to the UK for capacity and network building. These workshops and the network that Stonewall is helping to build across the region will bring tangible benefits to the work of grassroots activists in the region.

I share your belief that we must ensure that government actions are effective, practical and coordinated. A series of workshops bringing together officials from FCO, DFID and the Government Equalities Office will take place in the coming weeks

aimed at further developing a cross-government approach to our international LGB&T rights policy. I have asked that the evidence from these workshops be used to inform advice to Ministers on how we can best ensure a strategic approach to our work.

You will have received an invitation to join me in marking Human Rights Day at the FCO on 8 December at 5.30pm. I am pleased that Ruth Hunt from Stonewall and an activist from a regional LGB&T rights organisation will join a panel discussion looking at the phenomenon of shrinking civil society space. I do hope you will be able to join us.

Yours, as ever
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RT HON BARONESS ANELAY OF ST JOHNS DBE

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN

Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict