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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

VIDEO MESSAGE TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MEETING
ON VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION
BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY
Geneva, 7 March 2012

Madam Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council,
Distinguished members of the Council,
Ms. Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address this historic Human Rights Council session.

Some say sexual orientation and gender identity is a sensitive subject. I understand. Like many of my generation, I did not grow up talking about these issues. But I learned to speak out because lives are at stake -- and because it is our duty, under the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to protect the rights of everyone, everywhere.

The High Commissioner's report documents disturbing abuses in all regions. We see a pattern of violence and discrimination directed at people just because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. There is widespread bias at jobs, schools and hospitals, and appalling violent attacks, including sexual assault. People have been imprisoned, tortured, even killed.

This is a monumental tragedy for those affected -- and a stain on our collective conscience. It is also a violation of international law. You, as members of the Human Rights Council, must respond.

To those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, let me say: You are not alone. Your struggle for an end to violence and discrimination is a shared struggle. Any attack on you is an attack on the universal values the United Nations and I have sworn to defend and uphold. Today, I stand with you ... and I call upon all countries and people to stand with you, too.

A historic shift is under way. More States see the gravity of the problem.

I firmly oppose conditionality on aid. We need constructive actions. The High Commissioner's report points the way. We must tackle the violence, decriminalize consensual same-sex relationships, ban discrimination, and educate the public. We also need regular reporting to verify that violations are genuinely being addressed. I count on this Council and all people of conscience to make this happen.

The time has come.