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STATEMENT CALLING ON SADC MEMBER STATES TO PRIORITISE LGBTQI+ RIGHTS

In March 2022, over 60 LGBTQI+ activists from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region met in Johannesburg to strengthen regional collaboration and promote strategies that advance the rights and well-being of LGBTQI+ persons within the Southern Africa region.

The convening noted that few SADC Member States had taken any steps to implement the 2014 Resolution of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on Protection against Violence and other Human Rights Violations against Persons based on their real or imputed Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity.

Per Resolution 275, we call on all SADC Member States to end all acts of violence and abuse, whether committed by State or non-state actors, by enacting and effectively applying appropriate laws prohibiting and punishing all forms of violence, including those targeting persons based on their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identities, ensuring proper investigation and diligent prosecution of perpetrators, and establishing judicial procedures responsive to the needs of victims.

As SADC-based LGBTQI+ activists, we call for legislative and policy reform across the region to recognise the right to dignity and non-discrimination of all persons. We urge the Member States to reform criminal laws which target people based on sexual orientation, gender identity, reproductive choice or economic status.

As SADC LGBTQI+ citizens, we further call for increased efforts by the Member States to foster social inclusion, including by recognising the diversity of familial relationships that exist, ensure legal gender recognition for transgender and gender diverse persons, and ensuring that human rights defenders work in an enabling environment free of stigma and reprisals.

As SADC-based LGBTQI+ activists, we acknowledge efforts made over the years to address HIV impacts on MSM, transgender women and gay men. We, however, observe the gaps in tailored and affirming medical needs for LGBTQI+ persons, with specific emphasis on transgender and intersex persons. Therefore, we call for amplified efforts by the Member States to scale up access to universal health care, including gender affirmative health care for transgender persons.

Where there have been positive steps by the Member States to include LGBTQI+ persons in health care programmes, LBQ+ women and transmen remain excluded from resourcing, evidence generation, and governance structures. We, therefore, call on the Member States to prioritise LBQ women and transmen in Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) related strategies, resourcing, and evidence generation and to prioritise intersex persons in policy and legal reforms.

We finally call on all SADC Member States to hold each other accountable for ensuring the domestication of regional and international treaties to safeguard the fundamental human rights of all citizens.

#EqualTogether #QueersWithoutBorders