

Dear colleagues, dear President of FICSA,

I am honoured to be speaking at the opening of this 77<sup>th</sup> session of your Council. My name is Anna Giudice, and I'm currently serving as the Vice-President of the UN-GLOBE Board. I'm here today on behalf of our Board and our network of Coordinators who represent numerous UN entities and duty stations across the world.

We consider **our partnership with FICSA to be among our most important**. We greatly value working alongside you in our shared efforts to ensure UN workplaces are equitable, safe, supportive spaces that are free from discrimination, harassment, and abuse.

FICSA and UN-GLOBE are organizations with **long histories of advocacy** and action on behalf of UN personnel. While we are still quite a young organization compared to FICSA, UN-GLOBE had the honour in 2022 of marking 25 years since our founding. UN-GLOBE was formally established in 1997 with the mission of advocating for LGBTIQ+ staff in the UN common system. At the time, "GLOBE" groups were common in large organizations and typically represented the interests of gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees.

Today, the acronym "GLOBE" has come to mean much more, and **we represent the interests of all UN personnel with diverse** sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics (referred to as SOGIESC), including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and who identify using different terms or no specific terms. As of 2024, UN-GLOBE has chapters in 18 UN duty stations and 27 UN entities, and we are in the process of opening chapters in numerous other locations.

In March 2020, **FICSA and UN-GLOBE signed a memorandum of understanding** which established our intention to collaborate to actively defend and advocate for LGBTIQ+ staff in the UN common system, to encourage diversity across the organizations with FICSA members, and to combat discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC. The MOU recognizes our universal strengths and shared commitment to our goals, and agrees that we will work together following joint goals and objectives.

**The first joint objective is promoting a more inclusive workplace culture.** We have agreed that we will collaborate with one another to confirm that all polices,

activities, and programmes of the organizations having FICSA members included respect the needs of LGBTIQ+ staff, and to cooperate in promoting diversity, equality and respect for people with diverse SOGIESC. We appreciate FICSA's commitment in this regard to consulting with UN-GLOBE.

**The second is ensuring that the views of LGBTIQ+ staff are heard and are conveyed to management of the UN.** We agreed in this regard that FICSA would consult UN-GLOBE to ensure that views brought to relevant high-level bodies include those of LGBTIQ+ staff.

Our joint focus on the human rights and equity of LGBTIQ+ personnel is not only good for LGBTIQ+ personnel, **but is good for the UN as a whole.** As an example, our Guiding Principles and Proposals on an Inclusive Parental Leave Policy that were published in July 2015 have served as an important basis for discussions within the UN-system to ensure that UN policies become inclusive of all families and treat them equally. More recently, we contributed to reviewing and endorsed the recommendations developed by the UN Parents group to ensure the proposals are inclusive of all families and parents as concerns parental leave. We can thus be assured that our focus on advancing the issues of LGBTIQ+ personnel benefits numerous other personnel across the UN system. The adoption by the GA in December 2022 of the parental leave policy, which is the first gender-neutral parental leave policy in the UN system benefits all parents not only LGBTIQ+ parents.

We believe there are additional ways we can support one another as we continue our work in 2024 and beyond.

UN-GLOBE has long prioritized safe and inclusive workspaces and equitable policies, including policies related to mobility, parental leave, pension access, and recruitment. **In 2024, we will continue prioritizing increased visibility and engagement.** We believe one of the keys to visibility is our Coordinator network. Through our Coordinators, the voices of LGBTIQ+ staff are heard, and the work of UN-GLOBE is amplified across the system. The more UN-GLOBE Coordinator representation we have, the more the issues we can identify and address. Increased visibility means more UN LGBTIQ+ personnel finding one another and coming together to share their experiences, concerns, and ideas for improving our workplaces; those experiences and concerns can then be amplified to UN leadership and those ideas put into action by our Coordinators. And, increased

visibility also means the global priorities of UN-GLOBE will be better known to personnel across the system, and the support we are able to give more widespread. In 2023 for instance we had new coordinators joining us in Thailand, UNICC and Washington.

We are thus continuing to ask entities and duty stations, through their executive leadership and Resident Coordinators, **to consider opening UN-GLOBE chapters**, and we continue to advocate for the UN-GLOBE Coordinators who are being onboarded to be active participants in decision-making and policy-making.

**We cannot achieve our goal of broader visibility alone**, however. We ask that you help us by sharing your knowledge of UN-GLOBE whenever possible, and by encouraging UN personnel who might benefit from the UN-GLOBE network to contact us or to join our membership through our website. We also ask that you share any recommendations you have about duty stations or entities that could benefit immediately from having a chapter and Coordinator representation. At the same time we count on your support to ensure that our visibility does not compromise our safety. We are also prioritizing **engagement**, in order to reach more of our community colleagues and reflect better the needs and priorities of our members across the world.

We additionally **ask for your help in our continued efforts to strive for workplaces that are inclusive for trans and gender non-conforming personnel and their dependents**. The UN System should be knowledgeable about the challenges, including security risks and threats, faced by trans and gender non-conforming personnel and dependents. In at least 57 countries, trans and gender non-conforming people are criminalized or prosecuted on the basis of their gender identity or expression. Where local legislation conflicts with UN human rights standards enshrined in international law, it is the obligation of organizations of the UN system to uphold these standards, including respecting the rights and protecting the security and wellbeing of trans and gender non-conforming people. These are just some elements from our comprehensive Recommendations for an inclusive workplace for trans and gender non-conforming personnel and dependents. We encourage you to both reference and share those Recommendations as you guide the staff unions you represent and as you interact with individual personnel who are facing issues of discrimination in their workplaces.

And finally, **mobility continues to be a key issue for our membership** and for LGBTIQ+ personnel across the UN system. With the issuance of the new mobility policy for the UN Secretariat, UN-GLOBE has numerous concerns. What will the policy mean for LGBTIQ+ individuals who may be considering starting a career with the UN? How will it impact existing personnel who may be faced with moving to locations where they feel their security is at risk? How will personnel navigate the complexity of determining where they can live and work, and how will they know when a location is not suitable for their particular situation? What do we tell LGBTIQ+ personnel who are making difficult decisions related to family building, relationships, dignified health care, and their careers? What do we want the UN system to look like twenty-five years from now, and how does mobility impact that? As we ask these difficult questions and support personnel who are impacted by mobility policies, we ask that, in your advocacy, you keep our unique concerns and realities in mind and continue to include UN-GLOBE in the key conversations about mobility and its impact.

In 2023, the Board also looked into health insurance coverage for LGBTIQ+ personnel. We have reviewed the existing policies and observed discrepancies in coverage both on paper and in practice. Even at HQ duty stations many of our members struggle to receive coverage for health care that is essential for their mental and physical health. We provided detailed inputs to the JIU Review of the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the United Nations system organizations to ensure that it covered this important aspect of access to health insurance for our members.

In 2023, many of our colleagues were directly or indirectly affected by the situation in Gaza, and in the broader region, and the attacks on the UN. Like many of you, our membership continues to ask us what we can do in the face of such atrocities, including over 158 of our colleagues killed. We are appalled by the attacks on the UN and its personnel and the killing of civilians. We also refuse the pink washing that aims to break the solidarity with our queer siblings all across the region. We stand with our colleagues in the region and beyond affected by the conflict. In these challenging times we must stand together for human rights and international law.

We also observe the worrying backlash happening globally and in many UN governing bodies aimed at stalling and reversing progress on gender and human

rights including and in particular LGBTIQ+ rights. There is a clear strategy to push back on terms and concepts that have been used and accepted since many years. This must not be an excuse for our senior officials and organisations to accept compromise language that effectively pushes LGBTIQ+ issues and individuals back into invisibility. We also have noted attempts to portray the secretariat and its staff as biased and “pushing an agenda” on these and other topics. We know by experience that this undermining will affect all of our staff, not only those from the LGBTIQ+ community.

**We appreciate you standing beside us on all of these issues.** We are confident that, with the support of staff unions, we can continue making progress on the issues that are critical to LGBTIQ+ personnel. We stand ready to provide input, strengthen dialogue and give feedback whenever possible. While the process leading to the development and hopefully adoption of the first UN system-wide strategy on violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons has not always been ideal, we do hope that its approval by the Secretary-General, hopefully soon, will allow us to open spaces for increased dialogue at entity and duty station levels jointly with staff unions. We encourage each of you to proactively reach out to UN-GLOBE coordinators and board to join forces in these challenging moments.

In closing, I wish to **acknowledge on this occasion how much your support** for LGBTIQ+ personnel means to UN-GLOBE and its members.

Thank you