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Equal Rights Coalition  
Strategic Plan  
2021-2026

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## Message from the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) Executive Committee

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Since its establishment in 2016, the ERC has worked to bring together governments and civil society in pursuit of a common goal to advance the human rights of all people, and to ensure their inclusive development, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex characteristics.

The ERC fills a critical space in the international human rights framework. It provides a channel of communication for discussing measures needed to protect and advance these rights, working closely with stakeholders, including regional and multilateral organisations, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector. It looks to foster a more informed understanding globally of sexual orientation and gender identity, and to highlight how these impact on and influence the lives of LGBTI persons. It seeks to build consensus around the common responsibility of governments and organisations to foster a culture of inclusion and diversity, and to share experience and national best practice on how to bring about positive change.

We have much to be proud of. But we all know there is more to do. We hope that this Strategic Plan will inspire us collectively to deliver a broader, bigger, and bolder vision on this essential strand of our human rights and development agenda.

# 1. Executive Summary

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This paper sets out the purpose and objectives of the ERC and the rationale for a five-year Strategic Plan to enable it to take forward work to defend LGBTI persons globally in a coherent and effective way. It argues for focusing the work of the ERC on four specific objectives around combatting violence and discrimination, promoting dialogue, promoting advocacy in international forums, and broadening the dialogue with non-state actors.

## 2. Vision, Mission and Values

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### Vision

The ERC works for a world where every nation recognises, promotes, and protects the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. It looks to ensure that everyone can participate in all aspects of life free of discrimination and violence, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics.

### Mission

The ERC is a global intergovernmental coalition committed to taking coordinated action to advance and protect the human rights of LGBTI persons everywhere. ERC member states do this by abiding by the commitments they made on accession, and which are set out in the ERC's Founding Principles (Annex A).

### Core Values and Principles

By signing the ERC's Founding Principles, each ERC member state has confirmed its commitment to the affirmation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, including race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

ERC member states have committed to a partnership with civil society, dialogue and peer learning, advocacy to promote international human rights norms, international collaboration and cooperation with other ERC member states.

### **3. Rationale and Parameters for a Five-Year Strategic Plan**

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The ERC is already contributing to a global dialogue on how states can ensure that the human rights of LGBTI persons are respected. But to achieve and monitor concrete progress it needs a Strategic Plan to articulate how its Executive Committee will respond to the challenges and opportunities in fulfilling its remit. To be of value and to ensure the best use of its resources this needs to set out specific strategic objectives which reflect its areas of priority and how work on these will be carried forward.

The ERC is committed to consulting and partnering with civil society to achieve greater leverage of skills and resources. The Strategic Plan should therefore include elements which foster clarity on the role which civil society can play to guide and support the ERC, and encourage broadening stakeholder engagement with philanthropy, the private sector, academia, entertainment, sports and other partners.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda recognises the need to combat inequalities and confront discrimination, and the commitment to leave no one behind. The Strategic Plan should therefore also incorporate a commitment to work to influence discussion on policy issues, and the implementation of the associated Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that the needs of LGBTI persons globally are taken into account.

## 4. Strategic Objectives (SOs)

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Taking into account the challenges and the opportunities to advance the full enjoyment of human rights for LGBTI persons in the current global environment, the diplomatic and development tools, capabilities at the ERC's disposal, the resources available and demands on the ERC, as well as the potential for strategic partnerships to advance its work, the ERC will prioritise work with civil society over the five years from 2021-2026 to:

- Eliminate violence and discrimination based on SOGI (SO1);
- End the criminalisation of LGBTI persons (SO2);
- Advance the implementation and monitoring of SDGs for LGBTI inclusion (SO3);
- Enlarge and build the capacity of the ERC (SO4).

With the commitment and engagement of the member states, the ERC co-chairs will take concrete targeted action to ensure that these objectives are actively pursued and will present an annual report at the end of each calendar year on progress on each objective.

## 5. Operational Objectives

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The operational objectives and implementation plan can be found at Annex B.

## 6. The ERC and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

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The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted unanimously by all 193 UN member states in September 2015. Recognising that ending poverty and deprivation needs to go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, spur economic growth and protect the environment, it sets out 17 strategic development goals for the year 2030. At the core of these is the principle that “no one will be

left behind”. This explicitly includes action to curb inequalities and confront discrimination. The ERC will work to influence the discussions on implementation of the 2030 agenda to ensure that the global LGBTI community and LGBTI persons are included in its advancement, and that they benefit from its achievement. The member states hold themselves and other governments to account for delivering progress for LGBTI persons and defending the human rights of LGBTI persons globally.

## **7. Core Strengths and Capabilities**

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The ERC is a forum, which allows member states to work together, with civil society, to promote and protect the human rights of LGBTI persons through diplomatic and development action, to learn from each other and to identify global priorities to advance its objectives, including through collective action at multilateral fora. It provides a biennial international conference that facilitates mutual dialogue, shared learning and the exchange of experience and best practices among member states.

The ERC provides:

- A unique global voice on LGBTI Equality. The ERC is represented in every region of the world. It provides a specific forum for countries to share knowledge and advocate collectively on issues of concern to LGBTI persons, including responding to human rights violations directed against them. It has the potential to bring a focused diplomatic voice on the full enjoyment of human rights of LGBTI persons to the international arena.
- A forum for pooling diplomatic, development and other resources. The ERC offers strategic, focused, coordinated engagement on LGBTI issues, pooling diplomatic and financial resources and increasing their impact.
- Diversity of the ERC’s membership, which includes states at different stages in their development on the human rights of LGBTI persons, means that it has the potential to draw on a wide pool of experience and information sources to spur

action and facilitate peer learning by the sharing of best practices.

## 8. Risks, Challenges and Mitigating Actions

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There remain risks and challenges to fulfilling the Five-Year Implementation Plan. These include resource constraints and the risk that national political issues of ERC member states result in a loss of traction. The continued commitment of ERC member states and their active engagement in the ERC can serve to mitigate these, and the fulfilment of the objectives in the Five Year Implementation Plan will extend and embed global good practice.



## Annex A: Equal Rights Coalition Founding Principles

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*Recalling* the affirmation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;

*Affirming* that rights and freedoms enshrined in international human rights law apply equally to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons;

*Expressing* our deep concern about the serious levels of violence and discrimination targeting LGBTI persons, as documented by various international, regional and national bodies;

*Welcoming* the positive steps taken in various countries in all regions to address acts of violence, to repeal discriminatory laws and policies, protect persons from discrimination and to raise awareness about the human rights of all, without distinction of any kind;

*Stressing* the importance of close involvement and participation of local LGBTI communities and other relevant stakeholders in our human rights and development efforts, and addressing the distinct challenges faced by lesbian and bisexual women, gay and bisexual men, transgender persons, intersex persons and other LGBTI persons who are at risk of human rights violations and abuses, including on the basis of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination;

*Recognising* existing coordination and cooperation mechanisms and initiatives to exchange experiences between peers within and between regions, and underlining the need for complementary engagement and action to advance the human rights of and promote inclusive development for LGBTI persons;

## **We, as participating States, commit to:**

*Strengthening* cooperation in, coordination of and communication about our efforts to advance the human rights of, and support inclusive development for, all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex characteristics;

*Establishing* a coalition to share, as appropriate, information between our States on how best to advance the human rights of, and support inclusive development for, LGBTI persons, and to consider measures needed to protect and advance these rights, working in close engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including regional and multilateral organisations, civil society organisations, and the private sector;

*Building* bridges, common ground and engaging in a spirit of open, respectful, and constructive dialogue and cooperation with all States and relevant stakeholders, always having in mind a positive perspective;

*Consulting* closely with civil society to ensure our individual and combined international efforts adhere to the principle of “Do No Harm”, do not undermine or further marginalise LGBTI persons or other persons in vulnerable situations, and instead create an enabling environment in which their human rights can be respected, protected, and promoted;

*Working* together towards a world where all persons, born free and equal in dignity and rights, are able to fulfil their precious birthright.

*Signed at Montevideo, 13 July 2016*