

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0138/08

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Marco Cappato, Sophia in 't Veld, Andrew Duff and Olle Schmidt, on behalf of the ALDE Group, Giusto Catania and Vittorio Agnoletto, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group, Monica Frassoni and Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group to the Commission

Subject: French-sponsored UN initiative to decriminalise homosexuality

France has launched an initiative within the UN aimed at decriminalising homosexuality throughout the world and has secured the backing of more than 50 countries, including all of the EU Member States, for a joint declaration to be submitted to the General Assembly. The declaration states that violations, persecution, torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, arrest and arbitrary detention, execution, and discrimination on account of sexual orientation and gender identity fly in the face of human rights, and it calls for legislative or administrative measures to prevent sexual orientation and gender identity giving rise to criminal punishments, in particular execution, arrest, and detention. The Vatican has expressed its opposition to the declaration: Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer at the UN, has said that a declaration with political force, endorsed by a group of countries, is tantamount to a request for states and the international human rights enforcement and monitoring machinery to 'add new categories of those protected from discrimination', but does not allow for the fact that these, if adopted, 'would create new and implacable acts of discrimination. For example, states which do not recognise same-sex unions as "matrimony" will be pilloried and pressured'.

What steps has the Commission taken, or will it take, to ensure that the French declaration is supported as broadly as possible among the UN member countries? Which non-European countries has it approached in that connection? What will it do to thwart the diplomatic action of the Vatican and the 91 totalitarian or fundamentalist states in the world where homosexuals can be punished, tortured, sentenced to terms of imprisonment, or even executed (in ten Islamic countries)?

Does the Commission not believe that it needs, as a matter of urgency, to raise this issue when conducting international relations and the EU's inter-religious intercultural dialogue with the Vatican and representatives of the Catholic faith, and that it should take the necessary measures, as it is apparently doing where non-EU countries are concerned?

Tabled: 09.12.2008

Forwarded: 11.12.2008

Deadline for reply: 18.12.2008