
World Congress on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Paris, 15 May 2009

In conjunction with the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) the French Government organized this congress. The congress was opened and chaired by Mrs Rama Yade, Minister of State, attached to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, responsible for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights in the French Government. The opening plenary was addressed by ministers from a number of European and African nations and well respected queer human rights activists.

The congress then split into the following 4 round table discussion groups:

- Progress and challenges towards universal decriminalisation.
- How can States and civil society cooperate to fight against human rights violations against LGBT people?
- The respect of the right to health of LGBT people
- Human Rights and Gender Identity

Each round table had 3 sessions

The first session for round table 4 was about "Transphobia, today, everywhere" and was moderated by Sophie Lichten from GAYLIB. Presentations were made by experts such as Susan Stryker and Justus Eisfeld. Various people from around the world also spoke of the experiences of transgender people and how Transphobia affects them, even in countries with progressive laws and constitutions.

Caroline Bowley was invited to present a paper to round table 4, session 2, on "Legal Recognition and Human Rights". I presented the paper on the successes and problems transgender people experience with respect to getting their birth certificates changed and legal recognition of their new identity in South Africa. The session was moderated by Jane Thomas from Transgender EU and other presenters were Mauro Cabral (Mulabi, GATE), Tamara Adian and Sunil Pant(Nepalese Parliament, Blue Diamond Society).

The 3rd session was on "Promoting social change, granting rights". This covered issues of current possibilities and limits of Trans organizations around the world with respect to legality, validity and funding. Session was moderated by Judith Vreer and presentations done by Andres Rivera Duarte, Khartini Slamah and Belissa Andria Perez (Trans Secretariat ILGA World)

The final closing plenary was again chaired by Rama Yada and feedback was given from each of the round tables.

After the congress we were all invited to join Minister Rama Yada at her offices for drinks and a chance to network. I made contact with a number of people and one of these was a Norwegian activist who invited Gender Dynamix to attend and present at the Norwegian Film Festival in September 2009.