



29 April 2019




Dear Supporter of Equality,

Fly the Rainbow Flag on 17 May for LGBT Equality!


We are writing to encourage your company to join the hundreds of companies worldwide who, on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), which is celebrated annually on 17 May, will stand up for equality for those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT).

In September 2017, the United Nation's Human Rights Office, in its Free and Equal campaign, published five 'STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR BUSINESS' to support the business community in tackling discrimination against lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people. These Standards, which are consistent with the UN Global Compact and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, encourage companies at all times to:


In the Workplace

-  **RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS.** Businesses should develop policies, exercise due diligence, and remediate adverse impacts to ensure they respect human rights of LGBTI people. Businesses should also establish mechanisms to monitor and communicate about their compliance with human rights standards.
-  **ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION.** Businesses should ensure that there is no discrimination in their recruitment, employment, working conditions, benefits, respect for privacy, or treatment of harassment.
-  **PROVIDE SUPPORT.** Businesses should provide a positive, affirmative environment so that LGBTI employees can work with dignity and without stigma.

In the Marketplace

-  **PREVENT OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.** Businesses should not discriminate against LGBTI suppliers, distributors or customers, and should use their leverage to prevent discrimination and related abuses by their business partners.

In the Community

-  **ACT IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE.** Businesses are encouraged to contribute to stopping human rights abuses in the countries in which they operate. In doing so, they should consult with local communities to identify steps they might take — including public advocacy, collective action, social dialogue, support for LGBTI organizations, and challenging abusive government actions.

Since then over 200 global companies have made a commitment to the standards (see list in Annex).

So what does this mean for companies in Myanmar; what can your company do for IDAHOT 2019?

In 2018 Colors Rainbow, a local organisation working on LGBT rights, published baseline assessments of the situation of LGBT people at workplaces in Yangon and Mandalay. This identified the societal discrimination faced by LGBT people in Myanmar, from school onwards, and the importance of – and opportunity for – companies putting their anti-discrimination policies into practice. It also showed that many misconceptions exist in Myanmar about homosexuality.

For IDAHOT 2018, Colors Rainbow worked with international organisations such as Embassies and UN agencies to fly the rainbow flag for the whole day. Over 25 organisations did this, and posted their solidarity on their Facebook pages. <https://dayagainsthomophobia.org/tag/myanmar/>. This year we are encouraging the business community to get involved. We are confident that with your help, we will achieve a strong signal of support for equality. Since MCRB's invitation in its recent newsletter to companies and other organisations to join us, over twenty companies and other organisations, both foreign and Myanmar, have already contacted us to take part. We hope that you and others will join them. We are also sending a similar letter to other major companies who are not yet supporters of the Standards of Conduct.

You can 'act in the public sphere' in line with your company's global commitment and show solidarity in a number of ways:

-  **Fly the rainbow flag.** Even if you don't have a flag pole, you can suspend it from a balcony or put it in a window or entrance. Please contact Tin Nwe Aye (tinnweaye.crb@gmail.com and 09400447181) at Colors Rainbow to obtain your flag
-  **Virtual flags are good too!** Put a IDAHOT 2019 Myanmar rainbow frame on your company Facebook page or individual staff pages (these will be available from MCRB and Colors Rainbow soon).
-  **Talk about diversity, including LGBT rights.** Organise discussions about the value of an inclusive and diverse workplace with your staff: Colors Rainbow can also supply awareness raising and discussion material, and videos please contact Tin Nwe Aye (tinnweaye.crb@gmail.com and 09400447181). You can also Invite Colors Rainbow to your workplace to raise awareness about LGBT rights (due to other programmes this will not be possible on 17 May IDAHOT itself). To help Human Resources Managers prepare for those discussions, MCRB is hosting a workshop on respectful workplaces and diversity on 7 May, at which we will discuss equality in the workplace, including for LGBT employees and customers, and share good practice. Please contact Myint Naing Kyaw at MCRB for further information (myint.naing.kyaw@myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org).
-  **Commit to the Standards.** If your company would like to join the hundreds of other companies signing on to support LGBT equality, please contact Salil Tripathi (salil.tripathi@ihrb.org), Senior Adviser, Global Issues, Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), one of MCRB's co-founders, who was involved in the development of the Standards.

We hope that your company will join the movement for equality in Myanmar and look forward to hearing from you!

Vicky Bowman

Director, MCRB

Khin Ma Ma Aye

Executive Director, Colors Rainbow

Annex (source UNOHCHR)

As of March 22nd, 2019, the 242 companies have already expressed support for the UN Standards:

180hb, ABN Amro, The Adecco Group, Accenture, Accor Hotels Group, Adidas, Aetna, AirBNB, Airbus, Air Canada, Amadeus, Amalgamated Bank, American Airlines, Anglo-American, ANZ, Aon plc, A.P. Moller – Maersk, Argos, Atos, A.T. Kearney, AT&T, Avianca, Aviva, Avon, AXA, Baker McKenzie, Banca Comunicacao, Banco do Brasil, Barclays, Barilla, Bayer, BASF, BBVA, BCLP (Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner), Becton Dickinson and Company, The Boston Consulting Group (BCG), BDMG - Banco de Desenvolvimento de Minas Gerais, Ben & Jerry, Best Buy, Biogen, Bloomberg L.P., BNP Paribas, BNY Mellon, Braskem, Brewin Dolphin, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Burberry, Café Brisa Serena, Calvin Klein, The Carlyle Group, Carta, Cervejaria Ambev, Cisco Systems Inc., Clifford Chance LLP, Cobasi, ClubMed, The Coca-Cola Company, Credit Suisse, Daimler, De Beers, Deloitte, Demarest Advogados, Deutsche Bank, Deutsche Post DHL Group, Deutsche Telekom, Diageo, Dili Ashtanga Yoga, Dilicious, Dow Chemicals, DWF, Eataly, Ebay, EDF, Erste Bank, EY, Exelon, Fidelity International, Fotos Publicas, Fozzoo Travel Sri Lanka, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP, Fujitsu, Generation Investment, The Gap, GlaxoSmithKline, Godrej Industries, Gol Linhas Aéreas Inteligentes, Google, Granite Solutions Group, Greenberg Traurig LLP, Grupo Sa Engenharia, Gucci, Habitat, H&M, Hemofarm, Henry Schein, Herbert Smith Freehills LLP, Hermes Investment Management, Hilton, Hogan Lovells LLP, HP, Hyatt, IFF, IGH, IKEA Group, Inditex, Infosys, ING, Intel, Ipsos, Itau Unibanco, JLL, Johnson & Johnson, JWT, Kellogg, Kenneth Cole Production, KPMG, The Lalit Hotels, Lee/Brock/Camargo Advogados (LBCA), Levi Strauss & Co, Lloyd's of London, Lloyds Banking Group, L'Oreal, Lufthansa, Lululemon, Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics, LVMH, Louis Dreyfus Company, Manpower Group, Maria Farinha Filmes, Marks & Spencer, Marsh, MAS Holdings, Marriott International, Marui group, Mastercard, Mattos Filhos, Mazars, Metro AG, Microsoft, McCann, McKinsey, MCV Advogados, Merck Group, Molson Coors, Monsanto, Moom, Nasdaq, Natura, Nestle, Netflix, New York Life, Nielsen, Nike, Nokia, Novartis, Oath, Panda Criativo, Ogilvy, Oliver Wyman, Omnicom, One Magical Week-End, Orange, Orkla, Ørsted A/S, OutLoud Strategies, The Palladium Group, Paul Weiss, Paramount, PepsiCo, Pfizer, PIMCO, Pinheiro Neto, Pinsent Masons LLP, Pixelasia Productions Dili, The Phluid Project, Ponto Link, Procter & Gamble, Publicis, PVH, PWC, Ralph Lauren Corp, RELX Group, RBS, Robert Bosch GmbH, Royal Caribbean, Royal Dutch Shell, Safilo Group S.p.A., Salesforce, Sainsbury's, Sanofi, Santana, Santander Group, SAP, Siemens, Simmons & Simmons, Schneider Electric SE, Slack, Smirnoff, SNC-Lavalin, Société Générale, Sodexo, Sonders and Beach Group, Spotify, [SS*X BBOX], Stanley Black & Decker, Suit Supply, Swiss RE, Syngenta, Telefonica, Telenor, Teleperformance Philippines, Tesco, Teva, The North Face, Thomson Reuters, Thyssen Krupp, Timor-Leste Coral Triangle Heritage Alliance, Tommy Hilfiger, Trench/Rossi e Watanabe Advogados, Trillium Asset Management, Twitter, Uber, UBS, Um.a, Under Armour, UniCredit, Unilever, Vector, Veirano Advogados, Veolia, Vert Asset Management, VF Corporation, Viacom, Virgin, Visa, Vodafone, Westpac, Williams-Sonoma Inc, Xerox and Zara