

## Delegation of senior executives meet with senior Vatican official to discuss LGBT+ discrimination

- His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State of the Vatican (an office described as the “Prime Minister” of the Holy See) took part in a meeting with a delegation of senior executives, civil society leaders, parliamentarians and judges to discuss LGBT+ discrimination
- The Cardinal welcomed the conversation and made a clear statement condemning all forms of violence against all persons around the world. He signaled his intention to look for common ground with the audience to collectively move forward with the conversation
- Representing the business community, Open For Business led a delegation of senior executives from global companies, including Accenture, Brunswick Group, Deutsche Bank, EY, IBM, Linklaters and Microsoft

**Vatican City, 5 April 2019** – Open For Business, a coalition of global companies promoting LGBT+ inclusive societies, sent a delegation of senior executives to represent the business community at a private audience with His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See.

During the audience, a preliminary research report was presented by the International Bar Association (IBA), Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIDH) and United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD). The research found that the discrimination suffered by the LGBT+ community in the Caribbean, due to the criminalization of same-sex acts, is highly damaging to their physical and mental health. The failure to secure basic protections for these vulnerable minorities means there is a likelihood of serious violations of international human rights law.

As the Pope’s most senior official in the governance of the Catholic Church, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin was present during the presentation on the criminalization of same-sex acts. The Cardinal welcomed the conversation and made a clear statement condemning all forms of violence against all persons around the world. He signaled his intention to look for common ground with the audience to collectively move forward with the conversation. This represents an important new level of dialogue with the Vatican across a broad base of stakeholders, which consisted of parliamentarians, judges, human rights advocates and business leaders.

Representing the private sector, the business leaders in attendance welcomed the opportunity to discuss such an important topic given its alignment with their companies’ values and dedication to LGBT+ inclusion. The Open For Business delegation comprised of the following senior executives from companies in the coalition:

- Monica Boll, Managing Director, Accenture
- Jon Miller, Partner at Brunswick Group and Founder of Open For Business
- Karl von Rohr, President and Member of the Management Board, Deutsche Bank
- Beth Brooke-Marciniak, Global Vice Chair - Public Policy, EY
- Tia Silas, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, IBM
- Gideon Moore, Global Managing Partner, Linklaters
- John Galligan, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Microsoft

“This comes at a time when many parts the world are seeing a vicious backlash against LGBT+ rights – and very often in the name of religion. Let’s not forget that same-sex acts are criminalised in more than 70 countries. We hope that today’s audience is an important first step in bringing in a new and powerful voice in support of LGBT+ inclusion globally,” said **Jon Miller, Partner at Brunswick Group and Founder of Open For Business**. “In many countries, we see evidence that LGBT+ discrimination is bad for business and economic growth so LGBT+ inclusion isn’t only a human rights issue, it’s about people’s welfare and livelihoods.”

Additional quotes by senior executives in the Open For Business delegation and attendees present at the private audience

"Inclusion and diversity are fundamental to Accenture's culture and core values. No one should be discriminated against because of their differences, such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, religion or sexual orientation. When we work together to create a workplace culture of equality for all, where everyone feels they belong, innovation thrives and we all benefit." – **Monica Boll, Managing Director – Accenture Operations and Global Pride at Accenture Network Sponsor**

"We have a responsibility to both business and society to work with influential platforms that advocate for a more inclusive and just world. Deutsche Bank is committed to advancing LGBT+ rights around the world. We are grateful for the Vatican hosting us to discuss this topic and look forward to continue partnering with other companies, civil society organizations and governments to advance this important human rights issue." – **Karl von Rohr, President and Member of the Management Board, Deutsche Bank**

"This is a momentous occasion for LGBTI people around the world. When you have an inclusive culture where everyone is valued equally and feels they can be the best version of themselves, you can fuel innovation, solve complex challenges and achieve better results. By advancing this agenda within our workplaces and global institutions, we can create a ripple effect that promotes societal change." – **Beth Brooke-Marciniak, EY Global Vice Chair – Public Policy**

"For over a century, IBM has supported policies and practices to ensure fairness and inclusion for all of our employees. We have found that leading innovation comes from collaboration between employees with diversity of thought, experience and perspective, and that is only possible when all employees can be who they are without fear of discrimination and retaliation based on their identity - including sexual orientation and gender identity." – **Tia Silas, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, IBM**

"We were well received and it was the start of a dialogue. The Cardinal made it clear that he would like to continue this dialogue." - **Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, Director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)**

"It was inspiring to discuss LGBT discrimination with His Eminence, Cardinal Pietro Parolin today at the Vatican. The research presented by IBA, IIDH and ILANUD on the criminalisation of same sex acts in the Caribbean, and the associated human rights violations, was truly shocking to read and as part of the Open for Business coalition, we will continue to make the case for greater tolerance, inclusion and equal rights around the world. Diverse societies are better for business and economic growth and I am proud that Linklaters is committed to LGBT equality and inclusion." – **Gideon Moore, Global Managing Partner, Linklaters**

"Today's meeting is an important step in strengthening the respect and dignity of LGBTI people everywhere. Microsoft works hard every day to advance equality and inclusion for our LGBTI employees, customers, and community members around the world, and we support efforts to ensure that everyone is recognized equally before the law." – **John Galligan, Senior Director of Government Affairs, Microsoft**

- NOTES FOR EDITORS -

## About Open For Business

Open For Business is a coalition of global companies making the case that inclusive, diverse societies are better for business and essential for economic growth. The purpose of the coalition is to advance LGBT+ inclusion globally, by presenting and promoting a positive economic and business case for equality of opportunity for everyone, across the world.

For more information on Open For Business, please visit <https://open-for-business.org/>.



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