

INVITATION

High-Level Roundtable on Gender Identity, Rights & the Law, Hong Kong, 2 October 2014

It is our great pleasure to invite you to a **High-Level Roundtable on Gender Identity, Rights & the Law in Asia and the Pacific**, co-organized by UNDP, the Centre for Comparative and Public Law (CCPL) at HKU Faculty of Law, and the Open Society Foundations (OSF). The High-Level Roundtable will take place at the Novotel Century Hong Kong on Thursday, **2 October 2014**, from 9:00am to 4:00pm.

This event focuses on some of the problems facing transsexual people living in Hong Kong and in the East and South East Asian region. Transsexualism is a recognised medical condition. Transsexual people experience a desire to live and be accepted as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth; they experience an incongruence between assigned and experienced gender. These feelings of incongruence are not a matter of choice. They often arise in childhood, can cause great distress, and in adolescence and adulthood may lead to a desire for healthcare aimed at modifying the appearance of the body. Therapy aimed at putting the mind right is ineffective, often harmful and has been judged by at least one major health organisation as unethical. Transsexualism is often little understood. Transsexual people experience stigma, discrimination, harassment and abuse. Many live with the threat of violence. They commonly report challenges in securing rights and opportunities in education, housing, work, health and other key areas of their lives. Many of these problems were spotlighted in a recent UNDP report entitled 'Lost in Transition'.

The High Level Roundtable focuses particularly on gender recognition issues for transsexual people, and aims to throw light on the debate on this issue in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

The High Level Roundtable will be moderated by **Mr. James Chau**, National UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador in China, and will tremendously benefit from the guidance, as expert panellists, of **The Honorable Michael Kirby**, Justice of the High Court of Australia; and **Dr. Stan Monstrey**, one of the world's foremost sex reassignment surgery surgeons, a Professor in Plastic Surgery and a leading member of Gent University Hospital's Centre for Sexology and Gender in Belgium.

We expect a number of other expert panellists, as well as a number of speakers from the transsexual community. Among the latter will be **Ms. Geena Rocero**, model, advocate, and founder of Gender Proud, an advocacy and aid organization working in the field of gender recognition (see http://www.ted.com/talks/geena_rocero_why_i_must_come_out).

The High Level Roundtable will bring together key opinion formers and decision makers in Hong Kong and the surrounding region on matters relating to gender recognition for transgender people. The event is being organised to bring together a wide range of stakeholders, especially influential legal and health experts, as well as allies supporting gender recognition, including legislators, judges, to discuss issues relating to gender recognition. Speakers from the transgender community will showcase the positive development impact of legal gender recognition for society as a whole.

We very much hope that you will be able to join in this event.

Please feel free to pass on this invitation to other interested parties. We ask that all persons interested in taking part in this event confirm their intention to do so by returning this email to Sheena Winter, who is helping with organizing this event in Hong Kong, at wintersheena@gmail.com.

**** ALL ARE WELCOME ****