

Beat: Lifestyle

## United Nations to recognize gay marriages of all its staff

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**USPA News** - The United Nations (UN) has begun to recognize same-sex marriages of all its staff members worldwide, regardless of whether the employee's home country recognizes such unions, the world body announced on Monday, though some UN agencies are not covered by the new policy. UN spokesman Farhan Haq said the policy change was communicated in an internal bulletin to staff last Thursday, but it was not made public until Monday afternoon.

UN-GLOBE - a group representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and inter-sex (LGBTI) UN staff members - hailed the announcement as a "historic achievement." In the July 3 bulletin, the world body said it would now determine the personal status of an employee by the law of the competent authority under which the personal status was established. Previously, a staff member's personal status was determined by the laws applicable in their country of nationality. As such, employees who are citizen of a country that does neither perform nor recognize same-sex marriages, but who get married in another country that does perform such unions, will now be recognized as married by the UN. Previously, these employees - though legally married in a country - would not be recognized as married by the UN if the employee's home country did not recognize the union. "Human rights are at the core of the mission of the United Nations," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in the internal bulletin. "I am proud to stand for greater equality for all staff, and I call on all members of our UN family to unite in rejecting homophobia as discrimination that can never be tolerated at our workplace." The policy change - which took effect on June 26 - comes after Ban said in mid-May that all employees of the world body deserve to be treated equally. It also comes more than 2.5 years after Ban held the first-ever meeting of any Secretary-General with representatives of UN-GLOBE, who have campaigned for years for full equality and non-discrimination of LGBTI staff in the UN system. "This is a historic achievement, one that was long overdue - a step that brings us closer to full equality," UN-GLOBE President Hyung Hak Nam said. "Too many of us have suffered under the previous policy. Too many of us have been unable to secure, for example, residency visas, and health benefits for our spouses because of a discriminatory policy that would refuse to recognize our legal partners. This discriminatory practice is now gone." There are some 43,000 UN staff members around the world, though employees of some separate UN agencies, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, are not affected by the policy change. There was no immediate word from those agencies whether they would also implement the new policy. "I believe that the entire UN system will follow suit, if history is any guide. And if any agency, fund, or program still refuses to change, we will make sure they hear from us. This includes the UNJSPF, our pension fund," Hyung Hak Nam said. He criticized UNJSPF for its "discriminatory policies" towards staff, and expressed hope that the pension fund will be under pressure to change. But while UN-GLOBE hailed Monday's announcement as a "huge victory," Hyung Hak Nam said there is more work to be done. "We have to address homophobia and transphobia in the workplace. We have to make sure staff members' sons and daughters - our families, not only our partners - are recognized," he said. "These are the battles coming up."

### Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2413/united-nations-to-recognize-gay-marriages-of-all-its-staff.html>

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**Editorial program service of General News Agency:**

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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