

No More Business as Usual

Corporate Leaders Must Stand Up for LGBT Rights in Africa

US companies committed to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights, including, Coca-Cola, Dow Chemical, General Electric, IBM, MasterCard and Walmart, must take a stand for human rights and against stigma and homophobia, including anti-homosexuality legislation, that compromise the safety, health and lives of LGBT people throughout Africa.

Each of these companies have clear policies that protect LGBT people from discrimination in the work place, and each of these multinational corporations has supported actions across the US and globally that promote non-discrimination and affirm the human and legal rights of LGBT populations.

Same-sex relations are illegal in 37 African countries. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan are in Washington this week at the US-Africa Leaders Summit discussing US investment in Africa. Both of these African leaders signed laws this year that call for imprisonment of citizens who dare to be openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Under the laws, individuals who work with associations of LGBT can be prosecuted as well. The Constitutional Court of Uganda recently ruled against that country's new anti-homosexuality law. Now is the time to urge President Museveni and these other 36 African heads of state to protect the rights of all citizens.

The CEOs of the listed companies who have investments, partnerships, and often direct business with African governments including those of Uganda and Nigeria will have the opportunity to address their leaders, including Museveni and Jonathan. These companies' leaders must use this forum to affirm their commitment to the rights and safety of their employees, customers, and broader communities by speaking out against criminalization of LGBT people, and those organizations working with them. In addition to violating human rights, anti-gay laws, policies and practices undermine progress made in combating the AIDS epidemic by further marginalizing the very populations most in need of HIV services.

As public health, human rights and HIV/AIDS advocates, we call on these leading corporations to play their role as global champions for equality—make it clear that financial investments require an environment that promotes the rights of all members of society, including sexual minorities.

Equal treatment under the law is not just good for health; it's good for business.

For more information, to get involved, and for a list of individual signatories, please visit www.avac.org/strategic-initiatives

