Secretary of State John Kerry has committed to advancing the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals as a central part of our human rights engagement. Taking into account the Secretary’s commitment as well as the Presidential Memorandum issued December 6, 2011, that directs all federal agencies engaged abroad to ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBTI persons, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) has developed a regional strategy that strives to eliminate violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Respect for the human rights of LGBTI persons in the Western Hemisphere varies dramatically by country. Some countries offer legal protections for LGBTI persons, whereas others have laws that criminalize same-sex sexual conduct between consenting adults. Recognizing that violence and discrimination based on a person’s real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity hinder the prosperity of countries, WHA has developed a four-part strategy to:

- Expand public outreach and awareness of LGBTI issues;
- Create and leverage existing partnerships and programs;
- Collaborate with multilateral partners; and
- Engage directly with host country governments.

Public Outreach and Awareness:
WHA engages the public on promoting the human rights of LGBTI individuals by:
- Working with media outlets and
- Facilitating LGBTI roundtables and web chats with civil society, academia, representatives from U.S. embassies, partner countries, and multilateral organizations.

Creating and Leveraging Partnerships and Programs:
WHA partners with governments, civil society, and the private sector in the region by:
- Participating in regular consultations with the diplomatic community in Washington, D.C., about ways to improve respect for the human rights of LGBTI persons in the region and
- Building multi-stakeholder partnerships to share best practices for the promotion of the human rights of LGBTI persons.

Multilateral Action:
WHA works with multilateral organizations by supporting:
- The Organization of American States in the promotion of the human rights of LGBTI persons including support for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ Rapporteurship on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Persons and
- Collaborative efforts with countries in the region to promote the human rights of LGBTI persons before the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council.

Engagement with Host Country Governments:
- Engaging in high-level discussions with officials from host country governments in the region regarding human rights of LGBTI persons and
- Creating spaces for dialogue with a diverse group of stakeholders.

“...is a global challenge, and one that is central to the United States’ commitment to promoting human rights.”
—President Barack Obama

For more information, please visit our website at: http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/social.