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For Immediate Release

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA ISSUES STATEMENT CALLING FOR UGANDA TO ABANDON “ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL 2009”; INVITES MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AROUND THE WORLD TO ENDORSE

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SOUTH AFRICA – Today the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) issued a statement to the Ugandan people and their leadership offering a science-based assessment of the proposed “Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009” and calling upon them to abandon or defeat it.

Noting that, “...it is good practice that legislation is based not on unsubstantiated opinion, but rather on recognised research findings,” the statement concludes that, “The scientific fields devoted to mental health and well-being, including psychiatry, psychology and sociology, do not consider homosexual orientation to be a disorder, but rather view it as a naturally occurring variation of normal human sexuality”.

The statement notes that while the bill and its proponents claim among its primary objectives is, “...to protect the children and youths of Uganda...”, there is no credible evidence the measures called for in the bill would achieve that outcome, and would instead “result in profound physical and psychological harms to the already vulnerable lesbian, gay and bisexual youth in the very population the legislation claims to protect.” The statement further notes that, “(r)esearch and clinical practice demonstrate that homosexual people have an overall potential to contribute to society similar to that of heterosexual people and that they pose no greater risk to children than do heterosexual people.”

PsySSA spokesperson and representative to the International Network on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns and Transgender Issues in Psychology, Prof Juan Nel, said “Given the outpouring of international condemnation of the bill on largely human rights, health care and faith based grounds, it was important that an analysis based on research and clinical practice from the fields of mental health also be offered examining the core arguments being used to justify the legislation.”

Prof Nel added, “The bottom line is that while the rhetoric being used to promote this bill may make for emotionally powerful politics, it has no basis in what is actually known about the nature of sexual orientation and homosexual people. What’s more, based on what we know about discrimination and its consequences, the bill is in fact quite ill-advised and dangerous. That is why the Psychological Society of South Africa is releasing this statement and why we are calling on other organisations and professionals dedicated to mental health and well-being – from around the world, but particularly here in Africa – to join us by endorsing the statement.”

The full statement is attached, and for those wishing to endorse the statement, it includes addresses for the President of Uganda and the Speaker of Parliament. It can also be found online at: www.psyssa.com.

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