

world briefs

ARGENTINA

Members of Lesbianas a la Vista marched through Buenos Aires on Sept. 16 to protest the Argentine government's anti-lesbian position at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.

The conference deleted a call for protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation from its "Platform for Action" when the delegates, who came from 189 countries, could not reach consensus on that point.

The demonstrators painted their faces white and wore black "to symbolize mourning for the exclusion of our rights from Beijing's final statement" and to "denounce...what conservative forces wish for lesbians: our invisibility and, finally, our elimination," said a press release.

They carried banners reading: "Lesbian Rights Are Human Rights" and "Menem [Argentina's president], the Pope and the Ayatollah—Together they stopped us."

Many observers of the march "expressed solidarity" with the action, the marchers reported.

AUSTRALIA

AIDS has peaked in Australia, Prime Minister Paul Keating announced on Sept. 27.

"A decade of hard and unremitting effort in this country has resulted in a welcome reduction in the rates and incidence of both HIV and AIDS," Reuters quoted him as saying.

Keating said the nation will launch its third five-year campaign in July, when the current campaign wraps up, targeting research, treatment, education and prevention.

Australia has seen about 19,000 cases of HIV infection. New infections have leveled out to about 600 yearly.

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The attorney general of New South Wales, Jeff Shaw, will present the State Cabinet with a series of far-reaching legal reforms recognizing same-sex couples and transsexuals, reported Dominic O'Grady in the gay newspaper *Brother Sister*.

"I would like to see legislation which treats a variety of stable relationships in a nondiscriminatory way," Shaw said. "That includes same-sex relationships and other relationships, irrespective of their sexuality."

"We want to treat all relationships in a way which is not governed by the traditional heterosexual view," Shaw said. "I think society has changed, and the community is ready to accept that relationships ought to be dealt with equitably, whether they are based on marriage or otherwise."

The most likely option for gay men and lesbians is a "domestic-relations act" which would give homosexual couples equal rights in such areas as property rights, bail, compensation claims and hospital decisions, *Brother Sister* said. Shaw hopes to change other laws that discriminate against same-sex couples, in areas such as wills and probates, he said.

Shaw also will present two proposals supportive of transsexuals. One would extend the protections of the state Anti-Discrimination Act, and the other would allow transsexuals to change their gender on their birth certificates.

COSTA RICA

The New Jersey-based Magnus Hirschfeld Center for Human Rights has filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against Costa Rica, over its treatment of gay men and lesbians.

The commission is the arm of the Organization of American States charged with enforcement of the American Convention on Human Rights, an agreement among Western Hemisphere nations to which Costa Rica is a party.

The center's director, William Courson, charged that Costa Rican gay men and lesbians

suffer, among other things, regular police harassment and serious media defamation.

The commission will refer the complaint to the Costa Rican government for an exchange of views prior to undertaking formal consideration of the complaint's substance and admissibility.

DENMARK

To prove a point, the male president and female vice president of Denmark's national gay organization, Landsforeningen for Boesser og Lesbiske, got married to each other Sept. 22 at the Copenhagen Town Hall.

Unlike same-sex couples, who marry under Denmark's gay-marriage law, Soeren Laursen and Birgitte Eckwald—even though they are a homosexual couple—will be allowed to adopt children and obtain artificial insemination through the state health care system.

Denmark legalized same-sex marriage in 1989, followed later by Greenland, Hungary (common-law only), Norway and Sweden. The Norwegian and Swedish laws contain the same restrictions as in Denmark.

FRANCE

The mayors of six Paris *arrondissements* (districts) pledged on Sept. 20 to begin offering partnership registration for gay and lesbian couples, reported *Agence France Presse*.



The officials, all Socialists or members of the leftist Movement of Citizens, said they will issue "certificates of cohabitation...to contribute to equality between all citizens whatever their personal situation may be."

Applicants must have lived together for a year. The certificates do not confer the rights of marriage but lesbian and gay groups said they are a step in the right direction, nonetheless.

NEW ZEALAND

Transsexual Georgina Beyer, a member of the Caterton District Council, is now running for mayor of the small Wairarapa township. Voting, which was by mail, concluded on Oct. 14.

Beyer was the first transsexual elected to public office in New Zealand, beating five other candidates in the process.

POLAND

The Polish Catholic Church's attempt to get the film *Priest* banned led a record 75,000 people to see it the first week it played, in late September.

Pawel Dutkowski of Solopan distributors said the church protest was "solely" responsible for the huge turnout.

"Massive audiences have been attracted," he told Reuters. "We ourselves could not have afforded such a large promotion campaign."

SPAIN

Several Spanish gay groups have called for the firing of Basque region Attorney General Jesus Cardenal after he wrote that diversity, divorce, abortion and homosexuality are corrupting the natural order.

Cardenal made the comment in his annual official report. The groups fear the remark will lead to increased gay-bashing.

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