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For Immediate Release

[Kampala, Uganda December 20, 2013]- Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) has learnt with deep regret that the ninth Parliament of Uganda has passed the Anti Homosexuality Bill 2009.

SMUG has learnt that the Bill as passed by Parliament maintains the prohibition of consensual same sex acts between adults and prescribes a penalty of life imprisonment for so-called repeat offenders. It also requires "persons in authority, including persons exercising religious or social authority to report offences under the Act within twenty four hours or else face imprisonment for three years or a fine." Furthermore, the Bill maintains the offence of "Promotion of Homosexuality" against anyone who acts as an accomplice or in any way abets homosexuality and "related practices".

"I'm outraged and disappointed that the Uganda parliament has acted in a very ignorant and irrational way" said Frank Mugisha the Executive Director, SMUG. "We shall fight this legislation TO THE END." he asserts.

While the Bill is yet to be signed into law by the President, SMUG condemns in the strongest terms the haphazard manner in which Members of Parliament passed it with little if any regard to procedure and to whether it complies with the 1995 Constitution as the Supreme law of Uganda. SMUG has received reliable information that the Bill was passed without the requisite quorum despite protests from some Members of Parliament. There is also no evidence that the Bill was subjected to the Human Rights Checklist which the Speaker of Parliament launched late this year.

"Today will go down in history as the worst day for LGBTI identifying persons and human rights in general. The passing of the bill has caused significant panic even before its assented" Mr. Mawadri, SMUG Legal/Human Rights Officer.

Should the President assent to the Bill, it would greatly undermine the fundamental Constitutional Rights of equality and non-discrimination of Ugandan citizens who identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB). The Act would also have dire implications for the rights to privacy, assembly, association and speech in addition to other basics rights of members of the LGBTI community in Uganda. If assented to, the law would as well spell a major setback for the freedoms of association of human rights organisations engaged in the promotion of these rights. The law would also curtail Uganda's gains against HIV/AIDS as it may compromise doctor-patient confidentiality, which could push LGB affect persons further underground for fear of prosecution.

SMUG reiterates that the Anti Homosexuality Bill undermines rather than upholds the family as it seeks to create fear and suspicion within families and societies and entrenches state sponsored homophobia.

The Act also undermines Uganda's obligations under international and regional human rights instruments, which uphold the basic human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination.

SMUG calls upon; the President of the Republic of Uganda H.E Gen. Yoweri K. Museveni not to

sign this bill into law so as to prevent its dire effects on human rights work and HIV/AIDS progress in Uganda.

We also call upon the entire international community to remind Uganda of its international treaty obligations and to join hands against the Anti Homosexuality Bill.

SMUG remains committed to pursue all possible lawful means to challenge the existence of such an intrusive law on Uganda's Statute books, and to defend the fundamental human rights of sexual and gender minorities in Uganda.

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