

Human Rights Council – 34th session

Item 3: Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Thank you Mr. President,

Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur which addresses key mental health issues directly and indirectly related to gender and sexuality and which seriously impact on the full enjoyment of human rights.

As the report notes, multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination continue to impede the ability of individuals, including women, girls and adolescents, to realize their right to mental health, stating that discrimination and inequality are both a cause and a consequence of poor mental health, with long-term implications for morbidity, mortality and well-being.

It also recognizes that harmful gender stereotypes and stigma undermine healthy relationships, social connections and the supportive and inclusive environments that are required for the good mental health and well-being of everyone.

We applaud the report's attention to the negative impact that the biomedical model has had and that through the proliferation of diagnostic classifications, reduces the diversity of human lives to a catalogue of mental illnesses. This is then used to justify interventions based on stigma without a solid scientific basis and constitutes a **pathologizing instrument** that promotes stigma and exclusion rather than guaranteeing the promotion of a non-discriminatory approach to **sexual diversity and bodily autonomy**.

A clear example is when mental health diagnoses have been misused to pathologize identities and other diversities such as the pathologization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons that reduces their identities to diseases, which then compounds the stigma and discrimination faced.

We call upon the Human Rights Council, the United Nations and member states to publicly acknowledge and to take effective action to eliminate patterns and practices that perpetuate gender inequality, harmful stereotypes, pathological biomedical model, violations of sexual and reproductive health amongst others which undermines the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Thank you,