

Item 5: Annual Interactive Debate on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities
Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you Mister President!

I make this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the report of the OHCHR on inclusive education for persons with Disabilities. We reiterate the significance of non-discriminatory policies in mainstream schools and the educational system. We would like bring to the attention of the Council, and this panel, the specific violations faced by people/children with disabilities due to a lack of access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education. This has been affirmed by the Report of UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education on the human right to comprehensive sexuality education in 2010.

The UN General Assembly Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities affirms; 'persons with disabilities must not be denied the opportunity to experience sexuality, have sexual relationship and experience parenthood.' However persons with disabilities are generally perceived to be either asexual or hyper sexual and their sexual and reproductive rights and needs are often ignored and treated with fear and contempt. This can result in persons with disabilities being subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and stigma, particularly in their access to sexual and reproductive information and health services, leading to unsafe sexual practices. It can also increase their susceptibility to sexual violence by denying access to information that helps in identifying and dealing with sexual violence. Without sufficient information provided regarding bodies, bodily changes and sexuality, persons with disabilities are not fully prepared to claim and exercise their rights, and live with confidence and freedom.

States have a responsibility under the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities to “provide gender and age sensitive information, support, and education on how to avoid, recognize and report instances of exploitation, violence and abuse.” We would like to bring to the notice of this panel, the multiple vulnerabilities and discrimination that persons with disabilities are subjected to due to a lack of comprehensive sexuality education. For example, women with disabilities, persons with disabilities with diverse sexualities, as well as young people with disabilities face discrimination at multiple and intersecting levels.

Hence we urge States and UN agencies to incorporate comprehensive, non-judgmental, scientifically accurate sexuality education to all persons including persons with disabilities. This should be coupled with human rights-based and inclusive information and services provided to persons with disabilities, with their full, free and informed consent, and respecting their privacy, confidentiality, bodily autonomy and choice. Persons with disabilities should be empowered to experience their sexuality positively and affirmatively.

We urge States to expedite legal, policy and programmatic efforts to provide Comprehensive Sexuality Education in an inclusive manner to all people, including persons with disabilities, and we urge this panel to provide recommendations to States on ways of doing so.

Thank You!