

26th session of the UN Human Rights Council

**Statement delivered by Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD)
*Agenda Item #3 - Promotion and Protection of all human rights, civil, political,
economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development - General
Debate***

Thank you, Mr. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative¹.

The mandate of the Human Rights Council is to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and address human rights violations and abuses.

In all parts of the world, the family is often a site of human rights violations, especially for women, children and older persons. According to the UN Secretary General, the most common form of violence experienced by women globally is intimate partner violence, or domestic violence, which includes marital rape. In other cases, women who are raped are forced to marry the perpetrator and coerced into forming a family with them. Child, early and forced marriages, sexual abuse of children and female genital mutilation also take place within the context of the family.

A draft resolution on ‘Protection of the family’ has been presented at this Council session. In order to make families stronger and safer for all family members, we urge Member States to ensure that any initiative on the family, first and foremost, focuses on State obligations to promote and protect the human rights of each individual within the family.

Mr. President,

All over the world, various forms of the family exist. These include child-headed families, families headed by AIDS orphans or their grand-parents, single-parent families, joint families, extended families, families without children, families of divorced individuals, intergenerational families, just to name a few. Hence, a standard approach to ‘the family’ in policies and programmes may exclude, discriminate against and stigmatise many forms of families. Different family structures require different kinds of support and assistance from Governments in order to enhance the well-being of individuals, families and communities. We urge Member States to ensure that any initiative at the Council pertaining to the family takes into account the existence of different types of families, and that provisions are made for the different needs and particular circumstances of diverse families and their members.

Thank you.

¹ The Sexual Rights Initiative is a coalition of organizations comprising of Action Canada for Population and Development, Akahata (Latin America), Coalition for African Lesbians, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (India), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and The Federation for Women and Family Planning (Poland).