

**44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health**  
**Action Canada for Population and Development**  
**3 July 2020**

Madam President, Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative and the Coalition of African Lesbians.

As pointed out in the report of the Special Rapporteur - ‘without addressing human rights seriously, any investment in mental health will not be effective’.

Following the outcomes of the Urgent Debate on Racial Discrimination and Police Brutality, Black people, Africans and people of African descent are again confronted with racist, imperialist actions of the Global North that fuel and perpetuate racism within multi-governmental spaces, and we have to grapple with its undeniable and detrimental effects on the mental well-being of individuals.

As we call out the Global North, we know all too well that States claim support of human rights yet continue to violate citizenry through enacting laws that violate the rights to bodily autonomy and integrity of LGBTI persons, women seeking abortions, persons with disabilities and sex workers through policies that are anti-poor, anti-black and “apolitical”.

Generational traumas of racism, sexism, capitalism, patriarchy, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia; the destruction of our environments and violations of our bodies continue to take a toll on the mental health of those who work, live, love and build community on devastated lands.

We are increasingly recognizing that mental health is deeply rooted in systemic oppressions – that ultimately to be well, we also need to be free and living in a just world. There is no mental health in a violent world.