

Statement by Sandeep Prasad of Action Canada for Population and Development to the Human Rights Council, in response to the progress report of the Chairperson of the Working Group on the implementation of operative paragraph 6 of GA resolution 60/251, October 3, 2006.

This statement is delivered on behalf of 8 organizations^[1] engaged in human rights activism and coming from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and North America. We have a question for the Chairperson of the Working Group.

We ask the Chairperson whether the Working Group is or will be considering the creation of a Special Procedure mandate on emerging issues. This Special Procedure would be mandated to investigate and report on human rights issues that do not fall within an existing mandate or are peripheral issues within a mandate. It would also give recommendations to the Council on mandate creation, thus avoiding, to a great degree, politicization and selectivity in establishing mandates. Like all Special Procedures, it would be independent and objective, and operate transparently through consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders. It could be constituted as a working group of independent human rights experts with experience in diverse areas of human rights. Such a Special Procedure would allow unexamined or under-examined issues to receive attention.

Since sexuality is central to being human, sexual rights should be among the first issues to be addressed by this new Special Procedure. Sexual rights encompass, among other elements, the right of every person to sexual health, sexuality education, bodily integrity as well as the right to have control over and decide freely on all matters related to sexuality, reproduction and gender. While some of these components of sexual rights have received attention from Special Procedures, other issues have not.

Part of the reason for this is that many of these issues fall into protection gaps within the system of Special Procedures. Protection gaps occur when certain human rights issues are not covered under any existing mandate or are only peripheral issues within a mandate. Protection gaps in the area of sexual rights and other important human rights areas must be closed and a Special Procedure on emerging issues would greatly advance the closing of these gaps.

We appreciate your attention and look forward to your responses on these issues.

^[1] Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA; India), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR; Egypt), Positive Women's Network (South Africa), Mulabi – Grupo de Trabajo Latinoamericano en Derechos Sexuales (Argentina), Polish Federation for Women and Family Planning (Poland), International Centre for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights (INCREASE; Nigeria), Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ; Netherlands), and Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD; Canada).