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HRC14: Joint Statement on Maternal Mortality Morbidity and Human Rights

Panel on Maternal Mortality Morbidity and Human Rights | Item No. 3

Organisations: Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD), Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), Federation for Women and Family Planning, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Allegiance of Women (IAW), International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP AP), Ipas, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Mr. President,

We would like to express our appreciation for the robust report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights, and thank the High Commissioner for contributing invaluable time and resources to producing the report and for inviting collaboration with the States and civil society.

In its landmark resolution 11/8, the Council recognized preventable maternal mortality and morbidity as a human rights issue. It also recognized the critical importance of integrating a human rights-based approach into national and international policies and programs to eliminate preventable maternal deaths and morbidity.


The High Commissioner's report lays the groundwork for the work of the Council, States and the international community on this matter by providing a comprehensive analysis of the human rights dimensions of maternal mortality and morbidity.

We welcome the report's emphasis on the facts that matter mortality and morbidity reflect inequality and multiple forms of discrimination and violence faced by women and girls throughout their lifetimes and that progress can only be made by ensuring the guarantee of the full range of women's human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.

We also want to highlight the report's important discussion of the human rights principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination, transparency, empowerment, sustainability and international assistance and cooperation, all of which are the fundamental components of a systematic and sustained human rights-based approach. In the context of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, we believe that effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms at the national and international level, that take full account of victims' rights

to remedy and reparation, are among the existing gaps in the efforts to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. Accountability, an important and constructive and helpful means to identify failures and shortcomings of existing policies and programs is absolutely critical.

Mr. President,

We fully support the recommendations contained in the High Commissioner's report and encourage the Council to endorse the report, its recommendations and conclusions, and to take prompt action toward their implementation. In particular, we believe that the international community needs to take a step forward and bring together all relevant key stakeholders to develop an operational framework that would assist governments in the integration of a human rights-based approach to programs and policies to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. The best practices and expert consultation  recommended in the High commissioner's study will greatly contribute to this end.

In addition, we think it is fundamental that the High Commissioner submits this report to the General Assembly for consideration as its High-Level Meeting in September 2010, which will review progress made towards achieving the MDGs.

Finally, we hope that the Council will continue examining the issue of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and adopt a follow-up resolution taking into account the recommendations included in the High Commissioner's report. The Human Rights Council has an important role to play in ending preventable maternal death and disability, taking the international community a step closer to fully protecting women's health and lives.

Thank you.