

**44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 2: Annual Report by the High Commissioner
Action Canada for Population and Development
30 June 2020**

Thank You President,

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

Discrimination in sports based on race and gender should be located in the colonial, racist and patriarchal histories of northern states which continue in this neo-liberal, post-colonial world. Black women and women of colour athletes continue to bear the brunt of racist and sexist policies and practices in sport. Many of these laws, policies and practices echo and reinforce colonial era ideas about 'womanhood' and 'beauty' which were always raced, classed and able-bodied; and the need to police, discipline and erase blackness.

Intersectionality, as a concept and approach, reminds us that we must look at the ways in which intersecting oppressions create the conditions for human rights violations. The regulations passed by IAAF requiring women and girls to undergo medically unnecessary interventions, their revival in various forms reveal 'international' to mean white and global north. The IAAF regulations, and those modelled on them, prescribe particular cultural constructions of womanhood, where white, feminine-presenting, able-bodied, heterosexual womanhood serves as the standard and any deviation from this standard is seen as abnormal, deviant, wrong and requiring of "fixing" and often experiencing public persecution.

Sports are of course not the only site of systemic, institutionalised racism and sexism. Even the international human rights system replicates its own racist, sexist and classist origins and ways of working. To a large extent it has failed at naming and addressing the ways in which race, gender, class, ability and nationality create conditions for inclusion or exclusion into the work of human rights. The most recent example being the modalities of this Council session where it is assumed that these will adequately provide for civil society participation, irrespective of location, resourcing and other status. Applying an intersectional analysis to the impact of these modalities will reveal that these modalities will be less harmful to the participation of northern based, European groups and be much more challenging for less resourced groups in the global south. Visa conditions, the high cost of getting to and staying in Geneva, travel bans and reprisals when returning to their home country are just a few of the obstacles that confront human rights defenders, particularly those coming from the Global South.

We cannot proceed with business as usual. We must defend civil society participation in formal and informal meetings of the Council as fundamental to ensuring that states respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Nothing about us, without us!