

45th session of the Human Rights Council

Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms

28 September 2020

Action Canada for Population and Development

Intersectional analysis requires grappling with power to identify how it is being redistributed in different contexts. Up to this point, in the context of the Human Rights Council, intersectional analysis has translated into stockpiling categories of analysis or identities in reports and resolutions, leaving the configuration of power untouched.

As we said in 2017 in this same forum, resolution 6/30 was adopted to serve as a constant reminder that we must not fall into this trap of limiting analysis about gender and human rights, including in the Council's methods of work. Efficiency measures and procedural reforms have reduced civil society participation in general, but have a greater impact on activities that openly address gender or race. For example, this panel used to last 3 hours but has been reduced to 2; and only 4 organizations will be able to speak today, while substantial activities on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in this Council seem to be perpetually postponed. At the same time, the Council barely provides basic accessibility measures and only for activities explicitly addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. Accessibility should be a basic requirement for all Council discussions, including for a panel on an intersectional perspective to the work of the Council.

This panel should be a space to meaningfully engage in a discussion that can encompass the full scope of the work of the Council in its impact on gender, which would require strengthening consultation and collaboration with feminist groups and organizations working on women's rights and sexual rights, including reproductive rights. Instead, too often this panel allows States to co-opt and instrumentalize gender equality and women's rights as a means to further incompatible foreign policy objectives or engage in pro forma exercises.

We see how patriarchy, heteronormativity and racism minimize and homogenize the experiences of women in all their diversity into palatable and respectable discourses that challenge no one and nothing. This is not a bug, it's a feature.