

Statement by Sandeep Prasad of Action Canada for Population and Development on behalf of Action Canada for Population and Development, Federation for Women and Family Planning, and International Alliance of Women to the Human Rights Council, Fourth Session, Debate on Institution-Building Working Groups, 29 March 2007.

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of Action Canada for Population and Development, Federation for Women and Family Planning, the International Alliance of Women and seven other organizations engaged in human rights activism coming from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America and Europe.¹

We would like to thank Ambassador Husak for his recent non-paper of March 12th. We are pleased to note that both this current non-paper and his previous non-paper reflect the wide consensus that protection gaps in the system of Special Procedures must be identified and closed.

Protection gaps are human rights issues that are not covered under any existing mandate in the Special Procedure system.

Ensuring that protection gaps are closed furthers the implementation of operative paragraph 4 of GA Res. 60/251 which requires that the Council be guided in all its work by the principles of non-selectivity and of enhancing the promotion and protection of *all* human rights, among other principles. Closing protection gaps also enhances the integration of gender into the system of Special Procedures as a whole, as many human rights issues currently falling into protection gaps either have a particular impact on women or affect women predominantly.

There must be a regular process or mechanism by which protection gaps are identified and closed in an independent, objective, and expert way.

One option that would achieve this is the creation of a Special Procedure for identifying and closing protection gaps. Such a Special Procedure would have as its mandate the promotion and protection of human rights issues falling into thematic protection gaps.

Given the range of human rights issues currently falling into protection gaps, this Special Procedure should be constituted as a working group of 5 human rights experts, appointed in the same manner as any mandate-holder, with an emphasis on gender and geographical balance and a diversity of expertise. After identifying an issue falling into a protection gap, this Special Procedure would undertake an exploration of the issue in an initial report to the Council.

After this initial report, the Special Procedure would fill in this gap in the same manner as any other Special Procedure: by undertaking further thematic studies of the issue, receiving communications from victims, undertaking country visits, and formulating recommendations to States to improve their human rights practices in the area. It would do so until the Council took action to otherwise deal with the issue within the Special Procedure system.

We hope the Working Group reviewing the Special Procedures will consider this proposal and ultimately recommend the creation of this mandate to the Human Rights Council.

¹ ARC-International (Switzerland-Canada), Center for Women's Global Leadership (U.S.A.), Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA; India), INCREASE – Nigeria, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (Netherlands), Positive Women's Network (South Africa), and Mulabi – Argentina.