

Human Rights Council – 34th session - Item 3, UN HRC, Annual discussion on the Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

Statement by Federation for Women and Family Planning in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

Mr President,

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and the comprehensive analysis of the negative impact that the expansion of fundamentalism has on human rights. Likewise, we appreciate the broad range of recommendations contained therein.

Fundamentalism and extremism are a threat to human rights. Not only do they reject equality and universality but such ideologies promote sectarianism and discriminatory attitudes towards those with differing views. The impact of such fundamentalisms, limits the enjoyment of women's rights and restricts the sexual and reproductive rights off all.

As the report notes, cultural rights are critical counterweights to fundamentalism and extremism; cultural rights calls for free self-determination of individuals, for respect for cultural diversity, for universality and for equality. Yet the reality faced by women, minorities and the marginalized means that they are not allowed to enjoy their cultural rights equally. Yet cultural rights can and does play a key role in combating fundamentalism and extremism. Cultural rights are human rights which require a human rights-based response and neither the state nor its institutions nor religious or traditional institutions can threaten internationally agreed human rights standards.

We have witnessed a growing trend of states and other actors that use culture and religion as a justification for violence. This violence is often directed towards women, girls and gender and sexually non-conforming persons and other marginalized groups. In the name of culture and religion, fundamentalists and extremists enforce the exclusion and marginalization of many individuals. They create the ideological basis for such violations.

We urge states to provide for and protect the separation of religion and state in order to allow those with different world views, minorities and women to exercise their equal cultural rights and to not be excluded from society. We emphasize that time is critical and we all have to respond effectively to fundamentalism and extremism so as to limit their influence on cultural diversity, universality and equality.

We call attention to all relevant United Nations treaty bodies to join efforts in opposing growing fundamentalism and extremism.

I thank you