

41st Human Rights Council Session
24th June 2019
ITEM 3 - Clustered ID with SR on health and SR on leprosy
Statement by the Swedish Federation of LGBT Rights - RFSL

Delivered by Simran Shaikh

Mr. President,

I am speaking on behalf of the trans and gender diverse activists participating in Trans Advocacy Week. We congratulate the Special Rapporteur on Health for its report on social determinants affecting mental health.

All around the world trans and gender diverse people suffer the extremely negative impact of stigma, discrimination and violence on our mental health. Exclusion from family and community life, limited or denied access to education, employment, housing and healthcare have long-lasting consequences, including depression and suicide. Those consequences are frequently aggravated by the structural lack of access to legal gender recognition and to gender affirming procedures and their coverage.

As frequently indicated by the Special Rapporteur, social determinants of mental health must be addressed intersectionally. Trans and gender diverse people who are also black or brown, sex workers, migrants, homeless, living in extreme poverty or in prison, children and teenagers are especially vulnerable. This situation is currently being aggravated by institutional attacks against trans and gender diverse people in different countries, including laws and policies regulating access to bathrooms.

We are particularly concerned by the use of mental health care as a weapon against trans and gender diverse people in the form of forced institutionalization and treatment, including so-called “conversion” therapies. As explicitly affirmed by the World Health Organization, our gender identities and gender expressions are not pathologies to be treated, but healthy manifestations of human diversity.

We call on Member States to work with us in dismantling social and legal determinants that put our mental health at risk, to create adequate institutional responses to transphobia and its consequences on direct victims, their families and communities, and to ensure full access to mental health care under conditions fully compatible with human rights standards.

We call Member States to implement ICD-11, and to make decisive advances towards depathologizing trans and gender diverse people, our gender identity and gender expression, while ensuring full access to legal gender recognition, gender affirming healthcare and its coverage.

We urge Member States to address socio-economic and racial injustice; its prevalence around the world and across our communities make mental health and access to mental healthcare a reality too far away from our reach.

Thank you, Mr President.