

**Panel discussion on the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism  
on the enjoyment of human rights**

**51st session of the Human Rights Council**

**Wednesday, 28 September 2022, 4 to 6 p.m.**

**Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development**

Thank you, President.

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative, Al-Haq, IWRAP Asia-Pacific, ILGA and AWID.

The human rights system is demonstrably reluctant to engage with entrenched structures of racism and colonialism, including in its contemporary manifestations as exemplified by Apartheid in the Palestinian context.

The frequent denial of the historical, contemporary and ongoing impacts of colonisation on human rights, including on the right to health needs to be confronted and reckoned with to achieve the laudable goal of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Reparations for the enslavement of people, pillaging of indigenous knowledge and resources through colonialism and the various forms of neo-colonialism we still see today must be part of the solution.

The response to monkeypox highlights the enduring colonial and racist power dynamics in global health and international organisations, and the inequity that was also experienced during the COVID-19 and the HIV-AIDS pandemics. Ultimately, it shows yet again whose lives are considered expendable. People who are immunocompromised, have disabilities, and are economically marginalised along with populations from the Global South cannot continue to be considered as 'collateral damage' and blocked from accessing vaccines and treatment.

We call on states and the international community to enact systemic change and rethink the foundations of the global economic system. We also call on the Council to keep colonialism on the agenda of the HRC until all of its manifestations are eradicated. Capital has fed and thrived on hegemonic patriarchy and the oppression and subjugation of populations through colonialism. A true decolonial approach must not only focus on the perceived "extreme" manifestations of racism and individual prejudice, but also on the systems of oppression, including capitalism and neo-liberalism, that create an enabling environment for continued human rights violations.

Thank you.