



Oral Statement
41st session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3
Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

We at Make Mothers Matters (MMM) congratulate the Special Rapporteur for his report advancing the realization of the right to mental health.

As rightly stated, promoting and protecting human relationships begins with the bond between infants and their primary care givers - usually the mothers. Giving a child the best start in life starts with supporting maternal health and including maternal mental health as the foundation for the child's emotional and cognitive development.

In particular, MMM would like to draw attention to the issues of maternal postpartum depression and parental burnout:

- Becoming a mother is a significant experience resulting in substantial mental, social and physical changes, with 15% of new mothers affected by postpartum depression.
- Parenting may also be experienced as stressful, exhausting and overwhelming, which can result in burnout¹. Maternal burnout in particular, is most often associated with being employed, working full-time and being a single mother. According to recent research conducted in Belgium, parental burnout affects 8% of parents².

Maternal mental health issues can lead to insecure attachments or neglect and even violence, which all have a long-lasting negative effect on a child's physical, emotional and cognitive development – high cost for society in the long term.

We at MMM support the call of the Special Rapporteur to promote non-violent, healthy relationships – and its starts already during early childhood. Not only must maternal mental health issues be acknowledged and addressed but parents and society must be educated on child development, positive parenting and the importance of sharing the care. Parents must also be emotionally, socially and economically supported in assuming their nurturing and educational responsibilities so that their children and the whole family thrive.

Ultimately, nurturing healthy and non-violent people and relationships is also about building peace.

¹ Burnout can be defined by a syndrome of exhaustion to prolonged situations of emotional imbalance, where the burden of perceived stress exceeds personal resources to cope with it.

² Roskam I., Raes M. E., Mikolajczak M., Exhausted parents: development and preliminary validation of the parental burnout inventory (2017)