RECOMMENDATIONS SOUMITRA PATHARE

**Which specific recommendations for States and other relevant stakeholders do you have, including suggestions of effective policy tools for the implementation of a human rights perspective to mental health?**

**- In your view, which should be the next steps in OHCHR’s work on mental health (e.g. thematic research, a more operational focus or else)?**

I am thankful to the OHCHR for giving me this opportunity to participate in this consultation. I wanted to use this time to highlight an issue that has been missing from the human rights debate in the mental health sector in general and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in particular.

While the CRPD and other human rights documents talk about vulnerable groups including groups marginalized by gender, sexual orientation and race, little attention is devoted to intersectionality. The human rights discourse has also ignored the issue of caste discrimination in South Asia and its intersectionality with gender, sexual orientation and mental health in the South Asian context.

Patricia Collins definition of inter-sectionality - Inequalities based on factors like race, gender, class, sexuality, age, ability, ethnicity, and caste (in the South Asian context) are interconnected and shape a person's health and well-being - is relevant to mental health and the human rights discourse has not fully engaged with intersectionality.

Intersectionality provides a lens to understand the specific and varied experiences and harms faced by marginalised and excluded communities, which sharpens our focus on how the combinations of determinants produce specific experiences and outcomes for communities beyond a simple additive effect.

Intersectionality is fundamentally linked to power working at different levels and human bodies are the sites where intersectionality of various forms of oppression work. I hope the OHCHR will engage with and examine the role of intersectionality in both the cause of mental ill-health as well as recovery from mental health conditions.

I am heartened to know that the WHO is in the process of issuing a Guidance on policy and strategic actions to protect and promote mental health and well-being – this is an important practical step to promote the rights of persons with mental health conditions. I also recommend that WHO engage more meaningfully with the concept of intersectionality to better protect and promote the rights of historically marginalized communities – be they gender, race or caste or sexual orientation, to name just a few.