

StopIGM.org: NGO Oral Statement CEDAW65 Switzerland, 31.10.2016

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Thank you, Madame Chair

I was born 1965 in Switzerland, with so called “ambiguous” genitalia. The doctors couldn’t tell if I was a girl or a boy.

First they cut me open between my legs to see, if they find a vagina.

At two months they opened my abdomen and found healthy testes, which they threw in the garbage bin, without telling my parents.

At seven they cut my genital to make me look more like a girl, allegedly with my consent.

Today they probably would make a boy out of me, by even more surgeries.

The doctors always lied to me and my parents. I spent my life in fear, pain and shame. I couldn’t talk to anybody. Only at 35 I discovered that I am not alone and that there are self-help groups.

As substantiated in our NGO report¹, in Switzerland all forms of Intersex Genital Mutilations are still regularly perpetrated with impunity in public University and Cantonal Children’s Clinics, and paid for by the Swiss federal Disability Insurance. On the other hand, adequate psychosocial support is still not available.

IGM practices in Switzerland have been considered by both CRC² and CAT³ as “ill-treatment” and “harmful practice”, referring to the CEDAW-CRC Joint general recommendation.

And during the previous session, also this Committee⁴ considered IGM as a “harmful practice”.⁵

To this day, in Switzerland there is no law to protect intersex children from these practices. The Swiss Government still refuses to acknowledge that this is an ongoing human rights issue, but claims this happened only “in the past”.⁶

We therefore hope that the Committee will ask the Swiss delegation tough questions on IGM, and will sternly remind Switzerland of its obligations under the Convention and the CEDAW-CRC Joint general recommendation.

Thank you.

1 <http://intersex.shadowreport.org/public/2016-CEDAW-Swiss-NGO-Zwischengeschlecht-Intersex-IGM.pdf>

2 CRC/C/CHE/CO/2-4, paras. 42-43

3 CAT/C/CHE/CO/7, para. 20

4 CEDAW/C/FRA/CO/7-8, paras. 17e-f + 18e-f

5 See also UN-COE-ACHPR-IACHR Joint Statement for Intersex Awareness Day 2016, “End violence and harmful medical practices on intersex children and adults”:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20739&LangID=E>

6 <https://www.admin.ch/gov/fr/accueil/documentation/communiqués.msg-id-62507.html>