

Dear Sir/Madam

Asia Pacific Transgender Network Calls for Depathologisation of Gender Identity Variance (Transgenderism)

The recently formed Asia Pacific Transgender Network, a coalition of transgender activists from 10 Asia Pacific countries and areas, joins the transgender community worldwide and many professionals working in the field of transgender rights, welfare and healthcare to call on organisations concerned with the health and welfare of trans people (APA, WHO, WPATH, etc.) to stop the psychiatric pathologisation of gender identity variance (transgenderism).

We note that the APA and WHO are currently engaged in revisions of DSM and ICD respectively. We join other professionals and organisations in calling upon the APA, in the next DSM revision (DSM-V), to remove diagnoses which pathologise gender identity variance, as well as those which pathologise cross-dressing. We call upon the WHO, in the next ICD revision (ICD-11), to remove transsexualism and related diagnostic categories from the section dealing with mental disorders, instead providing a diagnostic category elsewhere in ICD that will provide for the needs of those gender identity variant people who require medical care for their condition, but without the stigma attached to mental disorder.

We appreciate that some gender identity variant people, particularly those growing up in parts of the world intolerant towards gender variance, may experience a gender dysphoria that is both persistent and highly distressing. For such persons counselling and medical support aimed at helping them transition will be a medical necessity. For them a diagnosis may be appropriate for facilitating access to transgender healthcare. But we agree with others community groups and professionals that the most appropriate diagnosis is not to pathologise their identity. It would be more appropriate to focus the diagnosis either on the physical incongruence they experience (their problem is that their body does not match their identity) or their dysphoria (their problem is that they are depressed or distressed about their body). Once again, their identity should not be pathologised.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely

Sitthiphan B.

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Coordinator of Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN)