

Human Rights Council – 34th session

Item : Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Zimbabwe

Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Mr. President, Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative and Katswe Sistahood.

We welcome Zimbabwe's decision to accept recommendations to align its domestic legislation with the human rights treaties it has ratified and to align its legislation with the 2013 constitution. We also welcome Zimbabwe's acceptance of recommendations on addressing violence against women, discrimination against women and ensuring women are included in all economic processes as well as socio-economic, development and political work.

However, it is with deep concern that recommendations calling for decriminalisation and prohibition of discrimination against some of the most marginalised groups of women and people in our society, including sex workers, women with non-normative sexualities and persons of diverse gender identities did not enjoy the support of Zimbabwe. This begs the question of whether Zimbabwe is truly committed to addressing discrimination against all women, or only of those the government approves?

We urge Zimbabwe to take steps to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and services; to remove policy and procedural barriers to access modern contraceptive methods and to provide comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and youth. We call on Zimbabwe to urgently review the Termination of Pregnancy Act – to guarantee free safe abortion services to all women on demand. We also call on Zimbabwe to decriminalise sex work to ensure sex workers' rights to bodily integrity and autonomy, and access to health and justice.

We urge Zimbabwe to take seriously the attacks and threats, by both state and non-state actors, against Women Human Rights Defenders and civil society organisations whose ability to exercise their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and access to justice is severely curtailed. To undermine and restrict, through acts of omission or commission, the work of these human rights defenders is to the detriment of Zimbabwe's ability to fulfil its human rights obligations.

I thank you