

Human Rights Council- 36th session
Statement- South African UPR report
22 September 2017
RFSU

Thank you, Mr. President. RFSU makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome South Africa's commitments and efforts towards ending violence and discrimination against women and girls, as well as their commitment to uphold human rights of all persons with diverse sexualities and genders.

This year the country marked the 20th anniversary of the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act which is acknowledged as one of the most progressive reproductive rights laws globally. However, an estimated 50% of abortions are performed by illegal providers and almost 10% of the country's maternal deaths are from unsafe abortions. This leaves large numbers of women and girls still dying from unsafe abortions in the country despite progressive legislation.

Acknowledging the Government's commitments to Comprehensive Sexuality Education, we are deeply concerned by the high rates of unplanned, unwanted and unsupported pregnancies as a consequence of the state's failure to provide non-judgemental, sex-positive education. Instead, the current failing sexuality education programme emphasises messages of disease, danger and damage to young people. This is contrary to national and regional commitments to reproductive justice, including the Maputo Protocol, and is detrimental to the empowerment of women and girls.

We urge the South African Government to ensure, through implementation of its UPR recommendations, that the sexual and reproductive health and rights of all are upheld, and that women and youth are at the center of the fight for reproductive justice; not only as beneficiaries, but also as those with agency and the autonomy to make decisions about their own lives and bodies.

I thank you.