



**33rd session of the Human Rights Council  
Oral Statement, September 26th, 2016  
Annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the  
Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms**

Thank you Mr. President, Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We commend the Special Procedures and the Office of the High Commissioner for their courageous work to advance gender equality through their reports, country visits and public statements. Their rigorous investigation of human rights standards as applied to gender equality has shed light on the pervasive and shocking multitude of rights violations women and girls experience throughout their lives in all parts of the world.

We note with appreciation the initiative of some States to advance the normative and international legal framework on gender equality. However, we deeply regret the consistent parsing, fragmentation and erosion of women's human rights which has prevented the Council from substantively taking up most of the findings and recommendations of the different mechanisms in a way that is meaningful for women and girls.

While States heatedly debate the semantics of women's rights to control their own bodies and their own lives, according to UN agency statistics, each year, 303 000 women die from preventable maternal mortality<sup>1</sup>, 20 million women are forced to seek out unsafe abortions<sup>2</sup>, 225 million women are unable to access safe and modern methods of contraception<sup>3</sup>, 1.2 BILLION women experience physical and/or sexual violence<sup>4</sup>, and every single woman, in every part of the world, faces entrenched structural and systemic barriers to the realization of their human rights, their dignity and their autonomy.

We therefore ask States that seek to deny women their rights, for whom do you speak, when you speak about gender equality? Because it certainly isn't for the women and girls of the world, it isn't for us.

We call on this Council to stop using women's bodies as the battlefield in which geopolitical and ideological debates are fought and to work together to advance women's human rights as is your duty and obligation.

I thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/194254/1/9789241565141\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/194254/1/9789241565141_eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44529/1/9789241501118\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44529/1/9789241501118_eng.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/induced-abortion-worldwide>

<sup>4</sup> Derived from WHO statistics of 1 in 3 women worldwide experiencing sexual and/or physical violence  
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>