

**HRC36: General Debate Item 8**  
**25 September 2017**

**Joint statement on behalf of Action Canada for Population and Development, Federation for Women and Family Planning, Center for Reproductive Rights, Ipas, [SIGNATORIES WITH CONSULTATIVE STATUS].<sup>i</sup>**

Mr. President,

Through the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, States explicitly agreed to prioritize the human rights of women, including the eradication of gender-based discrimination and violence. However, many States have not yet made the important decision that women's human rights deserve to be upheld and their lives are worth saving. The continued criminalization of abortion and restrictions on access to and provision of abortion and post-abortion care in many jurisdictions is stark evidence of this.

Around 22 million unsafe abortions are estimated to take place around the world annually<sup>ii</sup>, leading to 7 million health complications<sup>iii</sup> and 47,000 deaths<sup>iv</sup>. In addition, there are major social and financial costs to women and girls, families, communities, health systems and economies. The criminalization of abortion and failure to ensure access to quality abortion services is a violation of the rights to non-discrimination, to privacy, and to make decisions about one's own body, and can constitute torture or ill-treatment, as repeatedly highlighted by UN bodies and experts.<sup>v</sup> Prohibiting abortion pushes it underground and gives rise to unsafe abortions, violating the rights to life, health and bodily autonomy. Moreover, the poor and those already facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are disproportionately affected, making the global community's pledge to "leave no one behind" ring hollow.

These human rights violations must stop now. On September 28, the Global Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion, we urge the Human Rights Council to address the human rights violations arising from criminalization of abortion and the denial of access to safe and legal abortion services through its resolutions, decisions, dialogues, debates, and the UPR. We demand in a collective voice that governments across the world respect, protect and fulfill the right to access safe and legal abortion services and post-abortion care.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>i</sup> This statement is joined by the following organisations and groups: Akahatá Equipo de Trabajo en Sexualidades y Generos, Coalition of African Lesbians, CREA, [SIGNATORIES WITHOUT CONSULTATIVE STATUS]

<sup>ii</sup> WHO: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs388/en/>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> WHO: [http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe\\_abortion/magnitude/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe_abortion/magnitude/en/)

<sup>v</sup> Center for Reproductive Rights, Breaking Ground, Treaty Monitoring Bodies on Reproductive Rights, 2016, available at <https://www.reproductiverights.org/document/breaking-ground-2016-treaty-monitoring-bodies-on-reproductive-rights>