

Human Rights Council – 34th session
Annual Full Day Meeting on the Rights of the Child
March 6, 2017
Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development



Thank you Mr. President,

Action Canada also makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative, Dance4Life, Choice for Youth and Sexuality and the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

Young people are, and will be, the drivers of innovation, the defenders of human rights, and ultimately the leaders of the global development agenda. While we comprise the largest generation of young people in human history, we are more than a demographic dividend. We are diverse, we are at different stages in our journey to adulthood, and we are subject to different forms of discrimination that stifle our growth. However, we are not voiceless and we are empowering ourselves to make our voices heard and to claim our human rights.

In its most recent General Comment, the Committee on the Rights of the Child calls upon States to recognize and support the evolving capacities of young people to exercise and claim their rights. Within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, this requires all stakeholders to move beyond a protectionist lens to consider how strategies to achieve each goal will impact the unique circumstances of young people, including through meaningful consultation with young people and investing in youth-led civil society organizations.

Such an approach is critical for the achievement of Goal 3 on health and Goal 5 on gender equality, particularly targets related to universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. Young people are among the most at risk for maternal death and disability, HIV, STIs, sexual violence, unwanted pregnancy, discrimination, unsafe abortion and yet our rights to access the information, education, supplies and services we need to protect ourselves are regularly denied. Moreover, as with adults, young people have the right to the highest attainable standard of sexual and reproductive health. This places positive obligations on states to create an enabling environment in which we are not just free from injury but can enjoy good sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing.

We call on States to recognize that adolescents have different needs from children, that all young people are entitled to special protections because of their unique stages in life but that they are also rights holders entitled to the full scope of the human rights framework, and that the rights of young people must be central to all efforts to achieve the SDGs, particularly those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you.