

**Human Rights Council – 36th session**  
**Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes – Brazil**  
**Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development**



Thank you Mr. President,

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of Ipas and the Sexual Rights Initiative. We welcome Brazil's acceptance of a number of recommendations relating to ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services in accordance with its commitments made at the Montevideo Consensus amongst others, and to continue expanding access to voluntary termination of pregnancy so as to ensure the full recognition of sexual and reproductive rights.

In addition, Brazil stated that it will continue to ensure access to safe abortion as long as it is subject to existing laws. Unfortunately, this is not enough and completely disingenuous. Current legislation on abortion is highly restrictive and not fully implemented preventing women and adolescent girls to have access to services that provide safe and legal abortions. In most of health services health professionals are permitted to refuse to perform the procedure requested by sexual violence victims. It is no surprise to learn that clandestine and unsafe abortions disproportionately affect poorer, socially excluded, black and rural women and that complications from unsafe abortion represent one of five causes of preventable maternal mortality in Brazil.

It should also be noted that these circumstances were increased during the public health emergency declared by The World Health Organization relating to the Zika epidemic. The government's inadequate response to the epidemic failed to prevent harm and to protect women's sexual reproductive health rights and the protocol on the health care response to the virus, elaborated by the Ministry of Health failed to address relevant reproductive rights, including access to safe and legal abortion for women not willing to continue their pregnancies with many uncertainties about future health consequences, as well as access to information on the risk of sexually transmitted infections, among the traditionally underserved populations living in the most affected areas in the Northeast.

The Brazilian government's commitments made in this UPR on ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services including on expanding access to voluntary termination of pregnancy without discrimination, means that it must comply with its obligations under international human rights law. We call on the government to reverse discriminatory policies and practices, and review punitive laws that impose unnecessary suffering for women in most need.

Thank you,