

Human Rights Council – Agenda Item 8: Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

This statement is supported by the Sexual Rights Initiative.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed that the right to development, as established in the Declaration on the Right to Development, is a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. We are concerned, therefore, at attempts being made at this Council to undermine widely understood human rights principles and a human rights-based approach, and replace the latter with a so-called 'right to development approach'. We assert that human rights cannot be realised without a focus on human development; at the same time, sustainable development cannot be achieved without a human rights-based approach.

The enjoyment by every human person of economic, social, cultural and political development is critical for the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Just and equitable development policies, programmes and institutions provide a conducive environment for enhancing the capabilities of all people, without distinction, to enjoy healthy and meaningful lives and to participate in processes that benefit all individuals, communities, societies and the planet. Hence, the full range of human rights cannot be realised without operationalising the right to development.

A human rights-based approach is a framework for human development, normatively based on international human rights standards, directed to promoting and protecting human rights. This approach helps to promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves— especially the most marginalized—to participate in policy formulation and to hold accountable those who have a duty to act. Development, therefore, cannot be achieved without utilising a human rights-based approach.

Mr. President, we strongly urge this Council to acknowledge that if the lives of people are to be improved, the advancement of human rights and sustainable development should not be separated and used for political ends, but seen as interdependent. We must not choose between rights on one side and development on the other, as one cannot be achieved without the other.

Thank you.