



Human Rights Council – 29th session – June 2015

Item 3: Clustered ID with Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequence

Joint Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development and the Association for Women's Rights in Development

Action Canada and AWID make this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and reiterate her conclusion; “transformative change requires a shift in thinking as regards normativity, and it requires commitment, courage and an ethic of care that supersedes vested interests and entrenched territorial positions.” This shift in thinking requires political will and commitment to go beyond acknowledging the pervasiveness of violence against women, beyond the rhetoric of ending violence against women and beyond the focus on changing laws towards changing institutions to ensure and enforce accountability for the obligation of the state to effectively address violence. One of the most fundamental and necessary shifts relates to laws and practices that validate the control by state and non-state actors over the bodies, sexuality and lives of women and girls.

The lack of accountability to prevent and eliminate violence against women is a gap that States must address urgently. We bring to the attention of the Council that a major root cause of violence against women is the persistence of the control over women's and girls' sexualities, bodies and lives by State and non-State actors, including families. This can manifest itself in many forms including through early and forced marriage, sexual violence in marriages, which is not considered a crime in many states, the denial of abortion, the denial of sexual and reproductive health, and so on.

We call on all States and this Council to recognise that violence against women is intrinsically linked to the imposition and exertion of power and maintaining the status quo, and that policies and laws to prevent violence against women should not only be geared towards protection, but also towards ensuring freedoms, including the freedom to decide on sexualities and bodily autonomy. In this context, we would like to ask the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on how States can implement the principle of due diligence, to ensure the respect for and realisation of women's and girl's freedoms?