

Human Rights Council – 33rd session
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Ireland
Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development



Thank you Mr. President. Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Abortion Rights Campaign Ireland, the Sex Workers' Alliance Ireland and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We are deeply concerned that the government has rejected 16 recommendations relating to reproductive rights. The extraordinary number of recommendations on Ireland's restrictive abortion laws from States in different regions of the world, and the resounding silence from the Government in response, demonstrates Ireland's continued wilful disregard for women's and girls' human rights. The recommendations reflect similar criticism from several treaty monitoring bodies, the previous UPR session and most importantly, they give voice to the experiences of Irish women and girls who participated in the UPR process in order to shed light on the cruel and inhuman treatment they are forced to endure at the hands of the State when they need access to safe abortion.

While it is positive that the State has partially accepted recommendations relating to comprehensive sexuality education, the National Sexual Health Strategy does not provide adequate policy guidance on the implementation of CSE within the context of an education system that is largely dominated by religious-run schools. Access to non-judgemental information, education and sexual and reproductive health services are human rights imperatives. We remind the Government of its obligation to ensure that every young person in Ireland has access to fact-based, rather than faith-based, sexuality education.

We express deep disappointment over the Government's failure to respond to issues related to the human rights of sex workers during the review process, and its continued support for the criminalization of sex work. The Government has repeatedly failed to consider evidence and analysis from UN agencies, the Special Procedures, civil society and from sex workers themselves, outlining the detrimental impact criminal laws have on the human rights of sex workers. The Government has also failed to meaningfully engage sex workers and use an evidence based approach in developing policies and laws which directly affect their lives and safety. At this time the Irish government is set to pass a law that has proven in other jurisdictions to infringe on the human rights of sex workers and greatly impede their ability to keep themselves safe. In this critical moment, we therefore urge Ireland to acknowledge current sex workers' expertise on their own work and lives, develop policies that reflect this, and stay in line with what worldwide evidence is showing as best practice for the protection of their human rights.