

Human Rights Council – 32st session

ITEM 3 - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health – 14 June 2016

Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Mr. President,

Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of health. We welcome his acknowledgement of the need to address the challenges, barriers and discrimination faced by adolescents in accessing sexual and reproductive health information, education, services and goods.

Amongst the challenges highlighted are the lack of privacy and confidentiality, parental consent or notification requirements to sexual and preadulthood health information, education and services, criminal laws which prevent access to safe and legal abortion services which result in increased levels of maternal mortality and morbidity; enforced medical treatments, such as forced sterilization, abortion and contraception that are imposed on adolescents with disabilities; the challenges that intersex adolescents experience due to the irreversible and non-consensual surgeries performed on them during early childhood; the higher risk of HIV infection that adolescents in key population groups are particularly vulnerable to and not forgetting that AIDS as a consequence, remains the second most common cause of death among adolescents.

The report rightly emphasises the root causes of these challenges including gender stereotypes and unequal power relations; patriarchal and heteronormative practices and values; inaccurate and stereotypical views about adolescents in general and adolescents of particular groups; and the absence of comprehensive sexuality education, among others.

States have the primary responsibility to ensure the full realization of the right to health for adolescents, and must address the root causes mentioned by inter alia addressing and repealing criminal laws that restrict adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive health services.

We echo the Special Rapporteur's recommendations calling for states to meet their obligations to recognize adolescents as rights holders by respecting their evolving capacities and their right to participate in the design, delivery and evaluation of all policies and services affecting their health and well-being. We strongly encourage the Special Rapporteur to continue to focus on and examine adolescents sexual and reproductive health from a human rights perspective.

Thank you.