

Human Rights Council - 43rd Session
Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review - The Gambia

Thank you, President

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of Women in Liberation and Leadership (WILL), African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHeR) and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

Despite the promises of a 'new era' for the Gambia, the situation for many persons in the Gambia remains extremely dire. This is particularly true for members of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in the country. President Barrow's government has repeatedly committed to review and repeal laws that criminalise HIV transmission and consensual same sex conduct and to halt the prosecution of same-sex couples for consensual sexual acts. We are encouraged that these commitments were again repeated during the review of Gambia.

We are however disappointed that alongside these commitments, The Gambia continues to note recommendations that address discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The explanation that The Gambia is a conservative and religious country and that the general population is not ready to accept individuals with non-normative sexual orientations and gender identity and expression cannot be used to justify the denial of human rights of LGBTI persons. It also cannot be used to delay The Gambia from taking science-based measures to improve public health outcomes for all Gambians by repealing criminal laws against LGBTI and key populations in general. As a result of these laws, a section of Gambian population continue to be denied access to health and HIV services, their dignity violated and are constantly victim of a state-condoned discrimination.

We call on the government of The Gambia to step up its efforts in translating the commitments made into action and ensure that the new era is one that dawns for all its people - irrespective of their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Thank you.