

Human Rights Council - 45th Session
Item 6: Adoption of Universal Periodic Review – Armenia
Action Canada for Population and Development
September 28, 2020

Thank you, President

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Women's Resource Center Armenia and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome Armenia's acceptance of the recommendations to enhance women's access to basic health care and sexual and reproductive health services, and to introduce comprehensive and evidence-based sexuality education in Armenian schools.

The 3-days mandatory waiting period and arbitrary conscientious objections by doctors, continue to be major systemic barriers preventing women from accessing abortion services. These barriers often intersect with women's status, class, as well as their geographic location. In accepting the recommendation on enhancing women's access to basic health care and sexual and reproductive health services, we expect the government and particularly the Ministry of Health to take immediate steps to:

- Eliminate the 3-day mandatory waiting period
- Eliminate arbitrary conscientious objection, and add mandatory referral to a qualified doctor after an objection.

Urgent action is required to introduce sexuality education in Armenian schools in a way that supports young people's right to information and their right to health -- it must be evidence-based and comprehensive. This cannot be achieved through the existing "Healthy Lifestyle" course as it focuses on abstinence and stresses gender stereotypes regarding women's role in the society. This also cannot be achieved through sexuality education reduced to anatomy in Biology class, as suggested in the education reform agenda. It is also worth mentioning Both present a major setback in the right to access information on sexual and reproductive health and rights. We ask for the government to:

- Establish comprehensive sexuality education as a stand-alone subject in schools, designed in collaboration with young people and women's rights organizations.
- Develop and implement alternative comprehensive sexuality education programs such as peer-to-peer education, counselling corners in clinics, and training for parents of out of school youth.

We look forward to seeing our government take concrete steps to protect, respect and fulfil sexual and reproductive rights of all in Armenia. Thank you.