

**25<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council**

**Statement delivered by Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD)**

***Agenda Item #3 – General Debate: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development***

Thank you Mr. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative<sup>1</sup>.

We welcome this opportunity to address the Council and would like to emphasize the importance of comprehensive sexuality education, as a central component to the realization of young people and adolescents' rights to information, to education and to health, and their sexual and reproductive rights. Discussion on this topic is particularly timely given the ongoing assessment of progress made on the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the ongoing discussions surrounding the Post-2015 development agenda – within which young people and adolescents' rights to health and education remain central priorities.

The ICPD Programme of Action recognized young people and adolescents' right to access information regarding their sexual and reproductive health, in part through their access to comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education. Looking ahead, comprehensive sexuality education must form an integral component of education curricula and educators must be adequately sensitized and trained. Such education enables adolescents to make informed decisions about their sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health. It also helps to modify gender norms and stereotypes that seek to maintain gender-based inequalities and prejudices, thereby promoting gender equality and respect for diversity, improving women and girls' social status and reducing homophobia, transphobia and gender-based violence, including sexual violence.

Unfortunately, in the past few years, some States have withdrawn sexuality education curricula from public schools or have failed to adopt sexuality education curricula that are comprehensive, addressing issues of gender equality, relationships, pleasure, diversity, among other issues. Research demonstrates that a lack of comprehensive evidence-based sexuality education and stigma associated with adolescent sexuality may deter adolescents from seeking reproductive health services, and prevent them from making informed decisions on their sexual and reproductive health and from protecting themselves from sexual abuse. As a result, we know that each day, 2,500 young people are infected with HIV and more than half of all new sexually transmitted infections are among youth. Surveys have shown that less than half of young women know that condoms can prevent HIV transmission. And we know that gender-based violence remains rampant.

It is evident that failing to provide young people and adolescents with access to comprehensive evidence based sexuality education is a gross violation of human rights. We therefore urge States to provide comprehensive sexuality education, in accordance with young peoples' evolving capacities, both in formal and non-formal settings.

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Sexual Rights Initiative is a coalition of organizations comprising of Action Canada for Population and Development (ACPD), Akahata, Coalition for African Lesbians, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and Federation for Women and Family Planning (Federa).