

Human Rights Council 30th session – Agenda Item 6
Universal Periodic Review – Belarus
Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you Mr. President. The Sexual Rights Initiative, Gay Belarus, Amnesty International-USA and an independent activist that chooses to remain anonymous, support this statement.

We note the government's acceptance of recommendations to prevent and prosecute acts of domestic and sexual violence against women, and to ensure access for all women to reproductive health services and to improve the quality of care given. In order to effectively implement these recommendations the government must eliminate restrictions on access to oral contraception and voluntary sterilization, and expand the list of social conditions to permit free abortion and contraception to all women, including adolescents. It must also work to eliminate abortion stigma, eliminate age restrictions and parental consent requirements that limit adolescents' ability to make free and informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health, eliminate gender stereotypes in school textbooks, and introduce a mandatory national comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in schools.

We remain deeply concerned that the government has refused to accept recommendations to ensure respect for the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of gender to include LGBTI persons, as well as its refusal to adopt specific anti-discrimination legislation for this group.

We also remain deeply concerned that the government has refused to abolish Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes activities by non-registered organizations including NGOs who promote and defend human rights – and that breach of this Code can lead a fine or arrest for up to 6 months, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, and in doing so undermines the right to freedom of assembly and association.