

## **Human Rights Council – 30<sup>th</sup> session**

### **Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Bulgaria**

#### **Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development**

Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative and Gender Alternatives Foundation in Bulgaria.

We commend the government of Bulgaria on the acceptance of all recommendations to adopt legislation on gender equality. However, these same recommendations were made during the first cycle, and have still not been implemented. Hence, we urge Bulgaria to enact and implement relevant legislation with the celerity that the issue deserves.

We also welcome the acceptance of recommendations related to the elimination of traditional stereotypes regarding the roles of women in the family and in society, combatting gender based violence, including domestic violence, and criminalizing marital rape. In relation to these, we call upon the Bulgarian government to classify all forms of violence within the family as criminal offences. This should include both light and medium bodily injuries caused within the context of domestic violence, that can be prosecuted in a private complaint procedure at the victim's initiative. We also call upon the government to ratify the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

We regret the absence of recommendations on a number of issues addressed by stakeholders in their submissions, such as the high pregnancy rates among adolescents and youth, the overreliance on abortion as a method of family planning, and the need to include comprehensive sexuality education at all levels of school curricula. We call upon Bulgaria to address these issues and guarantee access to modern contraceptive methods, including through the National Health Insurance Fund, and include sexuality education in school curricula.

We urge that – in order to properly implement the above mentioned legislation and policies – the government consults and collaborates meaningfully with local NGOs, particularly those that have expertise in women's rights, youth and gender issues.