

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

**Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Croatia**

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

Action Canada for Population and Development makes this statement in collaboration with CESI, Women’s Room – Centre for Sexual Rights and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We note that Croatia has accepted a number of recommendations in relation to sexual violence and has agreed to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This is a positive development. Article 9 of this convention highlights the need to recognize, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant non-governmental organizations and of civil society active in combating violence against women, and calls for the establishment of effective co-operation with these organizations. It also calls for necessary legislative or other measures to provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence. This is vital, as at present there exists only one rape crisis center in the entire country, serving a population of over 2 million women. Ratification of the convention will mean that another 11 specialist rape crisis centres will need to be built at a minimum. We look forward to supporting and monitoring the work of the government in this regard.

We regret that no recommendations were raised on: making abortion accessible to women in all socio-economic situations, including through providing access to free abortion services; or on the need to remove Article 20 of the Law on Medical Profession which allows medical doctors to refuse to carry out abortion, or on the need to monitor the implementation of the Curriculum of Health Education in all preliminary and secondary schools in order to provide comprehensive sexuality education at all levels of school. We the urge the government to consider these suggestions seriously if it is to address the sexual and reproductive health and rights of its population.