

**40<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council**  
**Debate on Countering Nationalist Populism**  
**Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development**  
**15 March 2019**

Thank you Madam Vice President,

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the convening of this panel on mitigating and countering the rise of nationalist populism and supremacist ideologies. As some of the first targets and casualties of such ideologies, feminist activists around the world have been sounding the alarm on this trend for years.

From restrictions on access to safe abortion and contraception as a counter to low birth rates among those belonging to privileged race and class groups, to impunity for sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated in the name of cultural values - racist, xenophobic and misogynist rhetoric has very real and immediate consequences for women and girls.

We are not strangers to the discourse and tactics of retrogressive State and non-State actors. The backlash against women's and girls' human rights is well documented and has been studied by the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and the Special Rapporteurs on Racism, Culture and Violence against Women. Yet, successful feminist strategies of resistance to these forces and policy recommendations that seek to transform the patriarchal systems upon which populism depends, are rarely taken up or given due weight.

This sidelining of feminist knowledge and organizing is a clear indication that Member States are not truly invested in creating an enabling environment for the realization of all human rights for all people, everywhere. If Member States, the Council and its mechanisms legitimately seek to address the root causes of xenophobia and extremist ideologies, they would do well to listen to those who have lived these oppressions for generations and learn from the experiences of feminists who refuse to give up, refuse to cede space to those who would deny us our human rights and refuse to accept the unacceptable.

I thank you.