

Human Rights Council – 34th session - Agenda Item 6 – Universal Periodic Review

LITHUANIA

*Joint statement by Action Canada for Population and Development and
Federation for Women and Family Planning*

Mr. President,

This statement is made on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative and ASTRA Central and Eastern European Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

We welcome the acceptance of recommendations on sexual and reproductive rights by the government of Lithuania as it seeks to improve the situation of women and girls in Lithuania. However, we would like to voice our concern about the failure of the government to fulfill previous recommendations received during the first UPR, in particular the recommendation it accepted from Finland concerning making available a wide array of family planning methods, such as a comprehensive range of modern and affordable contraceptives.

It should be noted that since Lithuania's last UPR, the Government has failed to undertake any action whatsoever to improve access to contraception. This lack of access combined with the lack of comprehensive sexuality education in schools, has meant that Lithuanian youth and women continue to face unwanted pregnancies, unwanted births, and growing rates of sexually transmitted infections.

In addition, and despite another recommendation received during the previous UPR about formulating a national strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and integrating sexual and reproductive health into the next National Health Programme for the years 2026-2036, there remains no sexual and reproductive health law, policy or program which would provide a mandate for realising SRHR. In both 2002 and 2014 progressive SRHR draft laws were formulated, but neither were adopted, due to a lack of political will and the regressive influence of the Catholic Church and conservative groups who are also trying to restrict access to safe and legal abortion.

Clearly the Lithuanian Government does not consider SRHR to be a priority which explains the low status of sexual and reproductive health among Lithuanians of all ages. We call upon the government to take all necessary measures to implement a comprehensive law on women's reproductive rights and introduce comprehensive sexuality education in schools, and assure the government that we will be monitoring closely the implementation of its accepted SRHR recommendation.

Thank you.