

## **Human Rights Council – 29th session – June 2015**

### **ANNUAL DAY OF DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

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

Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the holding of this panel focused on domestic violence against women and girls – especially the focus on prevention.

The purpose of violence against women is to control women's bodies and lives, subjugate women, keep them oppressed and prevent them from exercising their rights to autonomy, dignity and equality in private and public life. It is crucial to recognize that gender inequalities and discrimination are at the root of violence against women, in all societies, and at all their levels, including within families. We emphasize the importance of addressing gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms around masculinity, femininity and the regulation of women and girls' sexuality. States must implement policies to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct in order to prevent discrimination and violence against women and girls. Comprehensive sexuality education for all children and youth is a critical intervention in this regard.

States have an obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish acts of violence against women, including where these acts are perpetrated by private persons, such as in cases of domestic violence. Domestic violence is known to be the most prevalent form of violence against women, and includes intimate partner violence. In reference to the ongoing discussions at this session of the Council, it is vital to recognize that intimate partner violence is a prevalent and increasing phenomenon that must be addressed through State action, including punishing marital rape.

We also would like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that women and girls subjected to marginalization, including on the basis of poverty, age, gender expression and identity, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, marital status, immigration status, and HIV status may face increased risk of violence in the domestic sphere. It is therefore vital to address the issue of violence against women with a special regard given to the multiple and intersecting forms of systematic discrimination and marginalization, which exacerbate violence against women and girls.