

Thank you Madame President,

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of Sarajevo Open Centre and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the many recommendations urging the Government to harmonize legislation and regulations across jurisdictions as well as to ensure consistent alignment with international human rights instruments, particularly the Istanbul Convention. The existing discrepancies in law and policy create serious human rights protection gaps for women, young people and persons subjected to intersecting forms of discrimination. These protection gaps include unequal access to safe abortion, social security systems for pregnancy and parenthood, protection from domestic and gender based violence, discrimination on the basis of sexuality and gender, and sexual and reproductive health services, among others. We call on the Government to fulfill its obligations under international human rights law to all people across its different jurisdictions and ensure that no one is denied their sexual and reproductive rights because of where they live.

A stark example of this lies in the discriminatory provision of abortion and contraception services across the country. Although technically legal and recognized by the State in its own report as a right, different healthcare funds regulate prices for abortions rendering such services inaccessible to many women living in poverty, especially women belonging to minority communities, such as Roma women, women with disabilities and women returnees. We regret the lack of attention from Recommending States to this critical aspect of gender equality, as well as in the State's national report, despite clear and convincing evidence provided to the Council from civil society.

Finally, we welcome the recommendation to introduce education on human rights and gender equality, as well as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in formal and non-formal education systems. We are pleased to note that the Government has indicated it is in the process of implementing the substance of this recommendation, however, we stress the importance of providing evidence-based, inclusive and non judgemental CSE as a positive element of all young people's healthy development and realization of their rights.

I thank you.