

44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 3: ID with the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls
Action Canada for Population and Development
6 July 2020

Thank you Madam President.

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

We welcome the report of Working Group on discrimination against Women & Girls on women's human rights and the changing world of work. The report has comprehensively considered the intersectional challenges, discrimination and violence women face in the world of work. However, it fails to throw light on the concerns of sex workers within the ambit of work and employment and loses a valuable opportunity to urge States to decriminalise adult consensual sex work to ensure the fundamental human rights of sex workers are upheld.

Consensual sex work is work and needs to be addressed within the labour law framework. Sex workers globally have been demanding for a world of work that is free from fear, violence and discrimination. Criminalisation of sex work, directly or indirectly, means sex workers have no avenue to access justice and are constantly in fear of their lives and livelihood. Criminalisation of adult consensual sex work also goes against the fundamental right to bodily autonomy and integrity.

By not recognizing the rights of sex workers, a huge subset of women workers are pushed into unsafe, precarious and dangerous working environment, exposing them to the risk of violence and discrimination without any remedy. We would urge the Working Group to meaningfully account for the rights of sex workers in all future reports and submissions.