

Human Rights Council- 45th Session
Item 6: Adoption of Universal Periodic Review – Turkey
Action Canada for Population and Development
September 28, 2020

Thank you, President.

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

It is with deep concern that we note that the Republic of Turkey has not accepted the recommendations on non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and implementation of comprehensive sexuality education. The refusal to accept these recommendations reflects the failure of the Turkish government to acknowledge bodily autonomy of individuals, especially young people, and fails to guarantee their right to information and their right to safety. It also contradicts the Turkish government's commitment under The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2012, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that the Republic of Turkey should “adopt a comprehensive adolescent and reproductive health policy and take the necessary measures to educate children on reproductive health and the measures for preventing STDs and HIV/AIDS.” Eight years later, Turkey has yet to include comprehensive sexuality education in any program, including national school curriculum. Young people continue to remain at higher risk of violence, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections.

During the previous UPR cycle, we welcomed the acceptance of the recommendation to “ensure in practice that all women are able to exercise their legal right to a safe abortion, without discrimination of any kind.” No improvement has been made in this regard and access to abortion remains highly restricted, worsening with the rising anti-abortion sentiments in the country.

We urge the Turkish government to:

- Provide statutory protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, beyond Article 10 of the Constitution,
- Adopt a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum nationally, planned in consultation with youth and sexual and reproductive health experts
- Guarantee access to safe abortion for everyone, including for young people and refugees by eliminating consent regulations, lack of delivery sites and the refusal of many public hospitals to provide service.