

FINAL WRITTEN STATEMENT

Human Rights Council – 37th session

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Zambia Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you Mr. President. Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Engender Rights Centre for Justice, Friends of Rainka, Generation Alive, TransBantu Zambia, The Lotus Identity, Women's Alliance for Equality, the Coalition of African Lesbians and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

During the interactive dialogue Zambia stated its commitment to the UPR process and that it would spare no effort in promoting and protecting human rights in implementing the outcome of the UPR. While it is promising that Zambia has now accepted the majority of recommendations made during this review, Zambia continues to note recommendations that relate to preventing violence and discrimination against persons on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Similar recommendations were also raised during Zambia's first UPR where they met the same response by Zambia. As civil society organisations working on this theme, we are frustrated by the continued refusal of Zambia to attend to these serious rights violations and protection gaps and the conditions that give rise to them.

Too often, conservative interpretations of culture and religion are used to justify and reinscribe colonial-era laws and policies that criminalise any aspect of sexuality and gender that is seen as non-normative or going against the reproductive standard. These laws, and the stigma and discrimination that result from them, pose a grave risk to the lives and wellbeing of women and girls, sex workers and LGBTI persons. The social and legal criminalisation leads not only to increased vulnerability of these persons to HIV and other forms of ill-health, death and disease, violence and discrimination, social exclusion and isolation but also reduces their access to services, redress and justice.

Zambia must comply with its regional and international commitments and obligations and meet the repeated calls by civil society within and beyond its national borders by repealing the laws that criminalise same sex conduct, sex work and abortion and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services is made available to all. In doing so, Zambia will send a strong message that no one is disposable or deserving of discrimination, violence, social and economic exclusion – it is only then that Zambia will ensure that no-one really is left behind.

Thank you