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Action Canada for Population and Development

Anna Kirey

Statement on Turkmenistan

Mister President,

We would like to commend the Turkmen government on changes in its political system and the new Constitution that guarantees equality for all Turkmen citizens regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs and political affiliation.

Given the Turkmen government's commitment to cooperation with UN agencies and international organizations, we would like to urge it to report publicly, accurately and comprehensively all health-related data and to adopt measures to provide adequate health care to all citizens in conformity with international obligations. Specifically, it is key to disclose information about the HIV situation in the country and provide access to treatment for people living with HIV and adequate prevention services and information to the general public.

As part of fixing the shortcomings identified in paragraph 23, we would like to call on the Turkmen government to review the official policy on infectious diseases and allow for objective assessment of the country's situation in this regard with the view of designing policies that will effectively guarantee the right of all Turkmen to the highest attainable level of health, as stated in the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Turkmenistan.

We would like to request the Turkmen government to clarify its position on recommendations 36 (b), 40 (e) about decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adults of the same sex.

We would like to call on Turkmen government to repeal article 135 of Turkmen Criminal Code to de-criminalize consensual same-sex behaviour among adults, as according to the Human Rights Committee criminalizing this constitutes a violation of Article 2 of the ICCPR, which has been ratified by Turkmenistan.

As the High Commissioner for Human Rights said in December 2008, '[...] there remain too many countries which continue to criminalize sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex in defiance of established human rights law'.

Finally, we would like to request the Turkmen government to ensure that NGOs, including those in the health sector and those supporting vulnerable groups, are free to register and operate without state interference or fear of reprisals.

Thank you.