

Human Rights Council – 32st session
Universal Periodic Review – Belgium

17 June 2016

Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you Mr. President. Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with SENSOA and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome Belgium's acceptance of the recommendations calling for the development of additional measures to provide assistance to victims of sexual abuse and violence, and the guarantee of women to effective access to justice in cases of harassment and sexual and domestic violence, and to adopt legislation against gender violence.

However, with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda's promise to leave "no one behind," Belgium must not forget about those furthest behind, specifically undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in regards to access to sexual and reproductive health services. We, therefore, urge the government of Belgium to address all barriers limiting access to sexual and reproductive health by investing in decent housing, employment, education and societal participation and to ensure accessible, available, affordable, acceptable and quality sexual and reproductive health services for undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers so they may realize their sexual and reproductive health rights. We also urge the government to make a clear distinction between accessing health services and the procedures linked to residence status, making sure that undocumented migrants are not deported if they seek quality medical services.

Moreover, we encourage the government to decriminalize abortion and initiate a debate on the topic of terminating pregnancies beyond 12 weeks in order to reduce the stigma surrounding abortion and facilitate women and girls' access to safe abortion. And lastly, we urge the Government to ensure Belgium's regional governments set standards and guidelines for the provision of comprehensive sexuality education based on UNESCO and WHO Europe guidelines for children and young people based on their evolving capacities, the specific needs of different groups, and a holistic approach.

Thank you.