



Human Rights Council – 26th session – June 2014

Item 6: Consideration of New Zealand's UPR Outcome - Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you Mr. President.

I make this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We commend the government's acceptance of recommendations to: allocate resources to address violence against women, and enhance efforts to provide equal access to health services.

Furthermore, we welcome New Zealand's commitment to voluntarily examine recommendations from the National Human Rights Commission and UPR stakeholder submissions regarding the legalisation of abortion.

Reform of New Zealand's abortion law is required in order to increase women's reproductive autonomy, and to remove the discrimination and stigma experienced by women when accessing abortion services. Upholding outdated legal provisions, which restrict women's reproductive choices, prevents women from accessing the highest attainable standard health.

The New Zealand Abortion Supervisory Committee, the group responsible for oversight of the *Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act of 1977* has, on a number of occasions, called for a review of abortion law. Yet the government refuses to do so.

In taking action on this issue, we urge the Government to: **provide unhindered access to safe abortion services that meet high standards of accessibility, acceptability and affordability, by: directing the Law Commission of New Zealand to conduct a full review of the suite of legislation related to abortion so as to remove: abortion from the *Crimes Act* to ensure legal access to abortion, in any circumstance, and the existing administrative barriers in the *Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act*.**

Such barriers include the costly burden associated with approving women's access to abortion, specifically, the requirement that two consultants approve women's request to access abortion services. These requirements have resulted in barriers to women's access to abortion services, such as: limited access to abortion services in remote areas of the country, and an overall shortage of certifying consultants, both of which can adversely affect women's decision-making process or delay access to services.

Finally, we welcome New Zealand's commitment to consulting with civil society organizations in examining these recommendations and welcome concrete follow-up on the legalization of abortion in the near future.

Thank you.