

**Human Rights Council – 28<sup>th</sup> session – March 2015****Item 6: Consideration of the UPR Outcome of Madagascar - Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development**

I make this statement on behalf of Action Canada for Population and Development and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We commend the government for accepting recommendations that call for the adoption of a national plan of action to combat sexual and gender-based violence, that criminalizes marital rape, and that strengthens laws and their implementation on the trafficking of persons. We further applaud Madagascar's acceptance of recommendations to prevent harmful practices such as early forced marriages.

However, in order for Madagascar to fully realise the right to health and the right to life of women a number of additional actions need to be taken.

The right to the highest attainable standard of health implies the right to access health services according to the needs of women. This includes access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including access to safe and legal abortion services. Maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion remain the second leading cause of maternal mortality and morbidity in the country with an estimated 575 maternal deaths occurring each year. The absence of state-provided legal abortion services therefore violates women's right to health, and its criminalization negatively impacts only women and is therefore discriminatory on the basis of gender. The right to life and liberty and security of the person implies respect for the autonomous decisions of women over her own body, therefore imposing restrictions on women's ability to decide freely on matters related to her body constitute violations of women's right to life, liberty and security of the person.

Furthermore, we also urge the government to consider systematizing and making compulsory the implementation of comprehensive sexual education programs, for all age levels, focusing on how to avoid unwanted pregnancy including reference to health care counselling and services on contraceptive methods.

Thank you