

2

Human Rights Council – 24th session – September 2013
Item 6: Consideration of UPR report of Uzbekistan
Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you Mr. President

I make this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative¹.

We welcome and appreciate the Government of Uzbekistan's commitment to end discrimination against women through their national plan of action. We further welcome the efforts of the Government to legislate progressively on domestic violence and to take steps to improve the Family Code and the Penal Code on violence against women, and we urge the Government to include judicial and social redress for violence, psycho-social support services, access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education openly and freely for women subjected to violence without any form of prejudice or condemnation.

However, we would like to highlight that such laws will not be sufficient unless there are efforts to prevent the infringement on the sexual and reproductive rights of women, and in particular we would like to focus on many cases of involuntary and coerced sterilization of women in furtherance of the government's coercive population policy, i.e. the two child norm.

Sexual and reproductive rights are human rights and they include women's right to make their own decisions concerning the number, spacing and timing of their children, free of discrimination, coercion and violence. It has been reported that state-sponsored programs for reducing maternal mortality have been used to conduct coerced and involuntary sterilization of women. Reports indicate that unreasonable targets set for doctors, and the practice of deliberately withholding information on modern, safe and less invasive means of contraception, have resulted in unsafe surgical sterilizations performed without the woman's consent and sometimes even without her knowledge.

Such practices are a grave violation of women's human rights. We urge the government of Uzbekistan to:

- (a) Immediately revise policies that violate women's sexual and reproductive rights, specifically coercive population policies
- (b) Increase education and awareness on sexual and reproductive rights and health, and availability of modern and safe contraceptive methods, so that women can make informed choices and decisions
- (c) Sensitise health personnel on sexual and reproductive rights and health and women's rights
- (d) Uphold their commitment to CEDAW by implementing policies that protect, promote and fulfill the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

¹ The Sexual Rights Initiative is a coalition of organizations comprising of Action Canada for Population and Development, Akahata – Latin America, Coalition of African Lesbians, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action – India, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and Federation for Women and Family Planning – Poland.

Delivered by: Rebecca Anne VOGEL