

Action Canada for Population and Development
CPD 46 Joint oral statement – ISRRC

This statement is delivered at the 46th Session of the Commission on Population and Development on behalf of the Human Rights Caucus, which is a group of 36 organizations working on sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and migrants' rights.

We call on members of the CPD to continue affirming the principles, goals, objectives, and recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation, including those related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, population, development, education, gender equality, poverty eradication, international and internal migration, and sustainable development.

Reproductive rights were explicitly affirmed as inherent human rights at the ICPD in 1994. The following year at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Member States affirmed that the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health. Through the outcome of this CPD session, governments must ensure that all migrants are able to realize these human rights.

Governments must ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and services for all, including migrants, refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers. Particular attention must be paid to marginalized groups, including adolescents and young women, rural populations, indigenous peoples, sex workers, and persons with disabilities. They must have access to comprehensive sexuality education and a comprehensive range of quality sexual and reproductive health services including maternal health care, contraceptive counseling and services, emergency contraception, safe abortion services, and counseling, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

The principle of non-discrimination should be integrated in the design and implementation of policies and legislation protecting the human rights of all migrants, whether documented or not, regardless of their legal status. This principle guarantees that migrants' human rights will not be compromised on the basis of sex, gender identity or expression, race, age, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, among other factors. We urge governments to review and reform any legislation and policies that may be discriminatory.

In keeping with human rights principles, including those outlined in the ICPD Program of Action, States must ensure meaningful participation of migrants in the identification of problems, policy design and budget allocation and the evaluation of programs and policy implementation affecting

their lives. It is particularly important to facilitate the participation of marginalized groups of migrants to ensure that their needs are addressed through the development, implementation and review of policies and programs.

Women represent 49% of the total international migrant populations worldwide. During the process of migration, migrant women are subjected to human rights violations, which in turn put their health and lives at risk. They are marginalized in the host country because they may face language barriers and may lack social and family networks. They often face greater difficulty than other women in accessing safe and stable employment, education as well as quality, affordable and confidential reproductive and sexual health services. The work they do obtain often offers low wages, no social services, and poor working conditions. Also, migrant women's reproductive or HIV status can be a precondition for accessing employment, and migrant women workers are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and sexual abuse in the work place.

Violence against migrant women and girls is pervasive and includes physical abuse, rape, and torturous practices such as isolation and starvation. Violence and the threat of violence have practical ill-effects on physical and mental health, and consequently, on sexual and reproductive health. Women are less likely to seek sexual and reproductive health services if they fear violence or the threat of violence and if they lack access to confidential in health care. Refugee and displaced women are routinely subjected to sexual violence, increasing their risk of unwanted pregnancies and STI's, as well as other short- and longer-term injuries. Skilled and knowledgeable health providers are needed to meet migrant women's sexual and reproductive health information, education and service needs. Governments must take decisive action to end all forms of violence against migrant women and girls and ensure access to services for migrants, including refugees and displaced women, who are survivors of violence.

The post-2015 development agenda must fully integrate a gender perspective, address gender-based violence and prioritize the sexual and reproductive rights and health of all people, with particular attention to migrant women and girls. It must galvanize government efforts to provide universal and equitable access to health care to all women and girls regardless of their migration status. We call on governments to take action, during this CPD, to meet their human rights obligations and to fulfill the sexual and reproductive rights of all migrants.