

**Human Rights Council – 37<sup>th</sup> session**

**Item 6: Universal Periodic Review Outcomes: Ghana Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development**

Thank you Mr. President. Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sisters of the Heart and the Centre for Popular Education Human Rights in Ghana and the Sexual Rights Initiative.

Commenté [MOU]: Waiting for confirmation and sign off

Ghana has made many important strides in responding to particular forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls – including through passing laws that criminalise female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence and rape; and establishing mechanisms and specialised units tasked with responding to various forms of gender based violence. However, slow and incomplete investigation of cases and high levels of corruption within the system and secondary victimisation lead to underreporting of gender based violence, a general climate of impunity and a serious lack of redress for survivors of violence.

Conservative interpretations of religion and culture are used to defend laws, policies and practices which violate women and girls’ rights to bodily autonomy and undermine Ghana’s commitment to human rights. Leaders, including many in government, continue to reinforce harmful and conservative ideas about sexuality and gender in some instances calling on communities to isolate, exclude and act against individuals who are seen to deviate from accepted norms. Despite these statements constituting hate speech and endangering the lives of affected individuals, these statements are met with impunity.

Mr President, we note with concern that once again Ghana has not accepted recommendations that call for repealing laws and policies which criminalise and discriminate against persons on the grounds of the sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, or to implement education programmes to reduce homophobia. While Ghana has accepted recommendations which relate directly to responding to violence against individuals on the grounds of their sexuality and gender, it is critical that they also address the various conditions which lead to the violence. This includes the repeal of laws and policies which are used to threaten, extort and silence individuals, active countering of harmful ideas and beliefs about gender and sexuality through popular education and school based comprehensive sexuality education and ensuring appropriate remedies, resources and services are available to individuals who experience violence and discrimination.

Thank you