

Statement of Action Canada for Population and Development – Item 6 – Universal Periodic Review – Switzerland – Adoption of UPR outcome – March, 2013

I speak on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative and Sexual Health Switzerland.

We congratulate Switzerland for accepting a number of important recommendations. However, we are concerned that it has chosen to reject recommendation 123.76 which would have obligated the State to adopt explicit federal legislation to provide protection against all forms of discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. We also remain concerned that Switzerland chose to reject Australia's recommendation to establish anti-discrimination ombudsmen in each of its cantons, though welcome its assurance that each of its cantons operate, or are in the process of establishing, contact points to which affected persons in need can turn.

We also congratulate the government for agreeing to take measures to decrease the level of unemployment of migrants, particularly among women and young people. In implementing this recommendation we also urge Switzerland to consider taking action to remedy the barriers faced by vulnerable groups such as migrants and young people to accessing reproductive health services, including access to contraception. These services can be difficult to attain due to financial or other constraints faced by these groups.

In addition to access to services, we call on the government to develop a national strategy that guarantees access for all children and adolescents to comprehensive sexuality education at school. It should be noted that there are no quality standards that are implemented nationwide despite the recommendation in 2009 by the Federal Commission for Children and Youth that stated that all children must have access to comprehensive sexuality education. This was reiterated by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its concluding observations to Switzerland in November 2010 when it stated that sex education and measures to promote sexual and reproductive health in the State party were inadequate and recommended the State to adopt concrete programmes on sex education as well as on sexual and reproductive health including in school curricula.

Finally, we would like to highlight our concern that Switzerland did not respond to Finland's advance question concerning ensuring and safeguarding the sexual rights of persons with disabilities, especially in regard to ensuring access to rights-based and comprehensive sexuality education for children and young people living with a disability.

We do hope that Switzerland will agree to address these issues

Thank you