

Human Rights Council – 28th session – March 2015

High-level panel discussion on human rights and climate change

Statement by Action Canada for Population and Development

Action Canada makes this statement in collaboration with the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the holding of this panel on human rights and climate change, and would like to emphasize the indivisibility of sexual rights from this discussion. As stated in the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, is needed and should be integrated into national strategies and programmes. As well, all human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, will be adversely impacted if action is not taken to mitigate the human impact of climate change.

Climate change leads to natural disasters, floods, droughts and many other adverse effects. However, the impact of climate change goes beyond that of the environment, and has wide-ranging socio-economic and political consequences, which exacerbates existing issues of poverty, livelihoods, and inequities, and has profound implications for social justice and gender equality. For instance, emergency situations often limit the ability of individuals to access sexual and reproductive health and services, information and education, practice menstrual hygiene, regular contraceptive use and safer sexual practices, access safe abortion and maternal health services, and live free of sexual violence.

It is imperative that discussions on climate change and human rights include discussion of protecting and fulfilling all human rights including sexual rights, for instance, by integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights into climate change related policies, plans, strategies and programmes, in relation to both mitigation and response.

The World Health Organization policy brief on integrating sexual and reproductive health into health emergency and disaster risk management provides guidance on part of this obligation.

I thank you.