

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

39th session, 10 September 2018

Action Canada for Population and Development

Item 3: Clustered interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery and the Independent Expert on democratic and equitable international order

Thank You Mr President,

Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. All too often, countries that claim to promote gender equality fail to consider or address the ways in which migrant women in domestic work are exploited. The failure of states to address profound gender, race and class inequalities of unpaid labour has meant that domestic work has remained overwhelmingly the unrecognized and unprotected labour of women, particularly women facing multiple and intersecting oppressions from the global south.

As the Special Rapporteur's report accurately highlights, neo-liberal economies with its attendant privatized systems and services that prioritise profits over people, reinforce patriarchal structures that compound unpaid care burdens on women, particularly migrant women. States tacitly accept these burdens as the cost of doing business in the modern world, despite rhetoric to the contrary.

International human rights law applies to all persons residing in a State's jurisdiction. However, unprotected and unregulated domestic work often results in isolation of workers, denying them access to information on their rights and services in the country of employment. Further, restrictive migration policies and practices that limit access to health services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services, that require persons to disclose their HIV and other health status, or that force migrating persons to undergo mandatory testing, constitute violations of basic human rights. Additionally, punitive regulations including curtailing migrant women's decision making over who they form relationships with, if, whether and when they have children in their country of employment undermine their right to bodily autonomy.

We demand States recognize all women's unpaid labour and its contribution to the economy and to the realization all women's human rights. We further call upon States to protect, respect and fulfil migrant domestic workers' universal human rights without exception including the right to health, to be free from violence, to fair working conditions and to bodily autonomy and integrity.