

Statement of Action Canada for Population and Development to the 16th session Human Rights Council – Item 6 – Adoption of UPR outcome of United States of America – March 18, 2011

Thank you, Mr. President. I am a sex worker and transgender rights activist from the United States. On behalf of more than a hundred civil society organizations¹ that called on the U.S. government to ensure the human rights of people engaged in sex work, I would like to congratulate the U.S. delegation for accepting recommendation #86. We believe that it is the first instance of affirmation of sex workers' rights in this forum.

Due to stigma and criminalization, sex workers -- and those profiled as such -- are subjected to violence and discrimination, and are often barred from necessary services and the right to equal protection under the law. State agents themselves, specifically police officers, commit physical and sexual violence against sex workers. These abuses are particularly rampant in low income, African-American and immigrant communities and also greatly affect transgender, bisexual, lesbian, and gay people. Globally, U.S. policies, such as the "anti-prostitution pledge," have negatively affected international HIV/AIDS efforts.

Having agreed, before this Council, that "no one should face violence or discrimination in access to public services based on sexual orientation or their status as a person in prostitution," the next step is for the U.S. to take concrete action to implement this statement. As part of such implementation, it is critical that the government work to systematically involve sex workers in policy decisions that affect them. Specifically, we hope to see the government eliminate federal policies that conflate sex work with human trafficking, investigate and prevent human rights abuses perpetrated by state agents against sex workers, and examine the impact of such criminalization on our communities. Ensuring the human rights of our communities needs to also be connected with broader efforts to protect sexual and reproductive rights and address the dysfunctional criminal justice system in the U.S.

We are deeply appreciative of the respect and openness that the U.S. administration has shown us throughout this UPR response process. We stand ready to work with the administration to implement this recommendation.

Thank you.

ⁱ Footnote of all the groups that signed on to the Call to Action