

Minister
of International Development



Ministre
du Développement international

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2

October 6, 2023

Mr. Ali Ehsassi
Chair
House of Commons Standing Committee
on Foreign Affairs and International Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Ehsassi:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) of the House of Commons, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Government of Canada to the recommendations made in the Twentieth Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development entitled, "*Canada's Approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*" on June 16, 2023.

Canada has been a leader in global health for the past two decades and is uniquely positioned to continue this leadership through 2030 under the 10-Year Commitment to Global Health and Rights (10YC), the government's largest and longest sectoral commitment in international development assistance that will see Canada's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) spending reach an average of \$700 million annually as of fiscal year 2023-24. Canada's SRHR funding is unique amongst donors; according to the "Donors Delivering for SRHR" Report for 2022, Canada ranked 2nd for its percentage of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for SRHR out of 30 donors.

Canada's leadership on SRHR is also reinforced through strong advocacy and engagement across international events and forums. Most recently, at the July 2023 Women Deliver Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, my predecessor, Minister Sajjan, along with Minister Ien, and Member of Parliament Arielle Kayabaga, had the opportunity to listen to and engage directly with other government ministers, parliamentarians, multilateral partners, as well as with youth and women's rights organizations about their SRHR priorities. This event highlighted the importance of Canada's advocacy and programming investments that are responsive to local needs and driving sustainable impact to improve the SRHR of women and girls in all their diversity around the world. Canada understands the critical role that SRHR plays in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and I will continue to champion this work in my new role as Minister of International Development.

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Canada

The Government of Canada takes this opportunity to thank the members of the Committee and witnesses for their work on this report. The Government welcomes the Committee's continued interest in Canadian efforts to comprehensive SRHR as a core element of women's health and empowerment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ahmed Hussen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "A".

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, P.C, M.P.

Enclosures

Government Response to the Twentieth Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development entitled, “Canada’s Approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”.

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada continue to invest in a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights globally.

AND

Recommendation 7: That the Government of Canada meet its commitment to spend at least \$700 million on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women globally by the end of fiscal year 2023–2024, and that it sustain this spending level, annually, until 2030.

The Government welcomes these recommendations for the Government of Canada to invest in comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) globally. Canada is committed to investing in comprehensive SRHR, as detailed in the 10-Year Commitment to Global Health and Rights (10YC). Announced in 2019, the 10YC lays out the government’s policy and programming commitments in support of comprehensive SRHR. Through this commitment, Canada will spend an average of \$1.4 billion annually by 2023-24 on global health, of which \$700 million will be allocated specifically to comprehensive SRHR and increased spending in neglected or under-funded areas of SRHR. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is currently on track to meet the global health funding commitments under the 10YC, with incremental funding increases in recent years and planned programming to ensure targets will be met by 2023-24. In Fiscal Year 2021-22 (latest data), Canada invested \$1.3 billion in global health, including \$564 million for SRHR. This represents a 14% (\$71.6 million) increase in SRHR spending over the previous year. Further increases in SRHR spending are planned FY2022-23 and FY2023-24 in line with the 10YC.

On June 14, 2023, the Minister of International Development, announced the launch of Canada’s SheSOARS Signature Initiative (2023-2030). This initiative frames Canada’s SRHR advocacy and programming under the 10YC across three main pillars (i) SRHR services in the neglected areas; (ii) SRHR in fragile contexts; and (iii) support for country-led SRHR priorities. These areas include: safe abortion and post-abortion care, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), family planning, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and SRHR advocacy.

As the lead department responsible for the 10YC, GAC has developed a multi-year Investment Plan to scale-up and maintain health and SRHR spending targets over the course of the 10YC. Canada’s investments under the 10YC are channeled through multilateral and global health platforms, as well as through collaborations with governments, and Canadian, international and local civil society organizations (CSOs). In FY2021-22, approximately 70% of 10YC funding was channeled through multilateral organizations, 27% was delivered in partnership with CSOs and 3% was provided directly to country governments.

Canada’s investments in multilateral global health platforms, including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund), the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF), Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, Nutrition International, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

(among others), play an important role in reaching the \$700 million target. These long-standing partners have strong and established country networks and expertise which allow them to work with country stakeholders, including civil society and government, to ensure that efforts are tailored to the individual country context and needs. The scale and reach of these global health partnerships also facilitates market-shaping to help reduce the price of commodities and services, and increase the number of beneficiaries that can be reached.

Canada's multilateral investments are complemented by collaborations with Canadian CSOs, including Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH). In 2019, GAC launched a five to seven-year \$325 million Call for Proposals to support the Health and Rights for Women, Adolescent Girls and Children. Projects under this Call are implemented by Canadian CSOs and approximately 85% of their activities focus on SRHR. Most recently, in early 2023, the department initiated the Resilient Health Systems for All Call for Proposals (\$300 million over seven years), which includes comprehensive SRHR as a key component. Canadian organizations work with local partners, including governments, in low and middle-income countries to deliver their programming.

GAC also supports international CSOs, notably the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Ipas and MSI Reproductive Choices (MSI), as well as local civil society and women's rights organizations (WROs). For example, in Colombia, Canada is supporting Profamilia, a leading Colombian non-profit organization, to deliver a project entitled: "Rights for Girls through SRHR Education," with \$10 million from 2017 to 2025. This project supports the delivery of CSE in eight municipalities of Colombia, and is helping to improve social determinants to reduce high rates of SGBV and early pregnancies. Additional details on Canada's support for local and WROs is included in the response to Recommendations 10 and 11.

Recommendation 2: That, as part of its international assistance for the strengthening of health systems, the Government of Canada promotes the integration of sexual and reproductive health as a core component of primary health care, and that it promote equality of access to those health services.

The Government of Canada welcomes this recommendation and reiterates its support for SRHR as an essential component of primary health care (PHC). Canada has a positive track record in promoting SRHR as an essential component of health PHC within international fora and across global health programming. Ensuring equity in access is a key feature of Canada's support, in-line with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) which commits to reaching those living in vulnerable and marginalized situations.

Within multilateral fora, Canada advocates and protects normative SRHR language, which is a critical component of PHC and Universal Health Coverage (UHC). For instance, during a 2023 UN negotiation on community-based PHC services, Canada and several like-minded countries successfully advocated for the inclusion of universal access to SRHR (A/RES/77/287). Likewise, Canada works within multilateral governance bodies to advocate for equity in access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services within PHC. Canada played an instrumental role in ensuring the Global Fund's 2023-2028 Strategy included an increased gender equality focus. Thanks to advocacy from Canada and

other like-minded countries, the Strategy aims to reduce gender-related barriers to accessing HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria services.

GAC also supports several key initiatives that aim to strengthen the integration of SRHR within PHC, notably through our funding to the GFF and WHO. The GFF provides country governments with on-budget health financing to support country-led efforts to strengthen PHC systems and ensure equity in health service delivery. With a focus on reaching women, children and adolescents, the GFF has been effective in promoting the integration of SRHR within PHC delivery. For example, in Uganda, the government has integrated family planning into essential health service delivery, which has led to a surge in the number of women and adolescents seeking contraceptives. In Côte d'Ivoire, the level of antenatal care for pregnant women has increased from 33 percent to 45 percent. In Vietnam, following training provided to 245 health workers, nearly 32,000 more women were screened for cervical cancer in 2021 compared to the year before.

Canada is also working with the WHO to promote the inclusion of SRH services within PHC. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada provided \$30 million (2021-2022) to the WHO to support the provision of essential health services and PHC, including SRH services, in ten countries. This project included technical support to strengthen the integration of SRH services in UHC priority setting; analysis of the service delivery impact of funding gaps for quality assured Mifepristone and Misoprostol (pharmaceutical commodities required for medical abortion); implementing research on people-centered approaches to integrated SRHR, including HIV; and implementing research for strengthening health systems response to violence against women and to address barriers in access to quality care for survivors. Canada is continuing to support these activities in Phase 2 of the project (\$25 million from 2022-23 to 2023-24).

Recommendation 3: That the Government of Canada provide funding for the realization of minimum standards of sexual and reproductive health as part of its immediate and ongoing humanitarian assistance, and that it also use its role within the international humanitarian system to advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights to be prioritized in every humanitarian response.

AND

Recommendation 4: That the Government of Canada's next national action plan on women, peace and security and its gender-responsive humanitarian assistance policy reflect Canada's prioritization of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Government welcomes the recommendations to support the prioritization of SRHR within Canada's humanitarian assistance and national action plan on women, peace and security. Canada continues to prioritize SRHR in its humanitarian assistance as one of the four key pillars of Canada's gender responsive humanitarian assistance policy. Canada's efforts include funding SRH services, the realization of SRH Minimum Standards and the delivery of the Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) for SRH in conflict-affected or humanitarian settings. The MISP is the key global standard to respond to SRH needs of affected populations at the onset of humanitarian crises. In 2022, Canada's humanitarian assistance included \$329.3 million in funding to UN agencies for programming with SRH and prevention

and response to SGBV as core aspects of their interventions. This included \$16.8 million to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for humanitarian interventions. GAC also contributed over \$25.5 million towards specialized SGBV prevention and response services and SRH services in emergencies through 64 non-governmental organization (NGO)-led projects, which helped to prevent death, disease and disability related to unwanted pregnancies, obstetric complications, reproductive disorders and SGBV. This represented 65% of NGO projects funded in 2022 and provided SRH services for 391,318 people, including access to contraception. Canada also uses its role in various humanitarian fora, governance boards, and with other countries to advocate for continued improvements related to SRHR, working in a range of negotiations within UN resolutions.

The report specifically notes Russia's use of sexual violence as a weapon against the Ukrainian people. The Government remains strongly opposed to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including in Ukraine. Since 2022, Canada has allocated \$147 million in development assistance funding to Ukraine to address emerging priorities, including support to survivors of SGBV, and to strengthen the resilience of government institutions and civil society, to meet the needs of Ukrainians, particularly of women, girls and vulnerable groups. For example, Canada doubled its support to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for a total of \$14 million, to support those impacted by SGBV and to ensure that needs for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services are met in Ukraine (a portion of which falls under Canada's 10YC). This includes actively working to ensure SGBV survivors and people at risk across Ukraine are provided with quality services including mobile psychosocial support teams, safe spaces, and SRH services delivery points. This complements existing development initiatives that continue to provide support to Ukraine including human trafficking prevention, psychosocial support for women and girls, and gender-based conflict analysis and data collection.

Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for 2017-22 prioritized SRHR by committing Government of Canada Action Plan partners to take steps to meet the specific needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings, including upholding their sexual rights and access to SRH services. Canada demonstrated global leadership in promoting gender-responsive humanitarian assistance and upholding sexual rights and access to SRH services, in accordance with the FIAP. For example, Canada supported SRHR initiatives in Bangladesh, Mali, and Sudan which provided services for women and girls on family planning and contraception, as well as legal and psychosocial services for women who experienced violence. In the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti, Canada contributed to the sensitization of SRHR to men, women and girls, strengthened quality service delivery of midwifery and emergency obstetric care, and supported advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives which led to firm commitments on the prohibition of child marriage. The next National Action Plan on WPS, which is expected to be released in late 2023, will address SRHR and is expected to build on the results achieved in this area.

Recommendation 5: That the Government of Canada supports and advocates with like-minded donor and ODA eligible countries to strengthen the collection and analysis of comprehensive and disaggregated data on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including data about women and girls in situations of armed conflict and other humanitarian crises.

Response: The Government welcomes the recommendation to support country-led efforts to strengthen collection and analysis of SRHR data. Canada is committed to supporting low- and middle-income

countries to improve their national data systems to inform evidence-driven decision making, notably with respect to the allocation of health resources in support of SRHR interventions. Canada's work in this area is advanced through a number of key partnerships.

Canada is one of the largest funders of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) based at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). PARIS21 is a global network of national statistical offices, development practitioners, and data transparency and accountability champions, which focuses on building local statistical capacity, enhancing data transparency and accountability, and catalyzing financing for data in developing countries. Since 2021, PARIS21 has hosted the Gender Data Network (GDN), a global community of practitioners that aims to raise the standard of gender data and enhance the use of high-quality gender data in evidence-based policymaking. GAC is currently providing \$5 million (2020-2025) in support of PARIS21's "Better Data for Better Lives" strategy, to enhance gender data and increase the use of high-quality gender data in policymaking.

Canada also works through key partners to drive improvements in country-level data collection disaggregation, analysis and application, notably around SRHR. For example, the GFF contributes to enhanced country-owned data systems which build analytical capacities and allow for data to be used for decision making at multiple levels in-country. Canada has also been instrumental in establishing the Centre for Excellence on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, which has helped countries to capture the vital events in a person's life, and particularly women and girls, so that they can access fundamental services like health care and education. The Centre for Excellence actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale up sustainable civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems that work for all, especially women and girls.

GAC also supports CanWaCH Canadian Collaborative for Global Health, which connects Canadian and global organizations to generate data on health, including on abortion in humanitarian and fragile settings. Canada continues to leverage its membership in different humanitarian fora, international initiatives, and engagement with likeminded donors and organizations to advocate for better collection and use of sex disaggregated data in emergencies to improve SRH services in humanitarian response. Canada is actively engaged in related negotiations, working with like-minded member states, to protect and advance Canadian priorities in UN resolutions, including support for multilateral initiatives to improve gender disaggregated data collection and analysis in humanitarian crisis.

Recommendation 6: That the Government of Canada increase funding for programming that targets disability-inclusive SRHR.

AND

Recommendation 8: That the Government of Canada prioritize adolescents in its programming focused on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including by supporting their access to comprehensive health services, information and education, and initiatives that are proven to be effective in preventing sexually transmitted infections.

AND

Recommendation 9: That, as it scales-up its assistance for sexual and reproductive health and rights globally, the Government of Canada ensure it is fully supporting access to modern forms of contraception, safe and legal abortion services, and post-abortion care.

The Government welcomes these recommendations and notes that Canada is committed to advancing support for disability-inclusive SRHR, adolescents, contraceptives and safe abortion through the 10YC. GAC's SRHR funding targets those experiencing marginalization and vulnerability, including adolescents and people living with disabilities. Projects undertake gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) to empower women and girls in all their diversity to exercise their SRHR.

Globally, one in five women has a disability. These women are at higher risk of experiencing SGBV and are less likely to access health care, including SRH services. Canada endorsed The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action in 2016 and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010. Canada also funds SRHR programming with an explicit focus on disability, including support for Ethiopiaaid, an organization which is training health care workers, government and law enforcement officials on working with women and girls with disabilities in order to enhance their access to SRH services and sensitize community leaders on harmful practices. To date, the organization has helped to establish 161 savings and loans associations for women and youth with disabilities and reached 104,478 individuals with disability-sensitive SRHR and gender equality awareness raising activities. Canada also integrates a disability-lens across many of its SRHR projects. For example, GAC has collaborated with Canada-based Humanity & Inclusion to improve SRHR of women and girls, including those living with disabilities, in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo by hiring community health workers with disabilities, and raising awareness of adolescents' sexual rights and family planning among people with visual or hearing disabilities.

In-line with the FIAP, Canada addresses the needs and experiences of adolescents as a cross-cutting priority within its international SRHR programming. In 2022-23, 46% of GAC's health programming delivered through Canadian CSOs focused on adolescent boys and girls. Through support to a range of Canadian organizations, including with Inter Pares, Oxfam Quebec, Oxfam Canada, Humanity and Inclusion, CARE, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Canada, GAC is investing in programming that prioritizes adolescents' SRHR. For example, in Cambodia, Inter Pares supports activities such as girls' sports competitions and student-led drama in middle schools to disseminate key messages on SRHR, SGBV, and discrimination reduction. Targeting adolescents and young adults in Ghana, Mozambique and Uganda, Right to Play Canada is establishing mentorship programs and training journalists to raise awareness of SRHR, and training community health care workers in adolescent and youth-friendly SRH services, to improve access to better care.

Canada's adolescent SRHR programming is also delivered in collaboration with international CSOs. For example, in 2018, with funding from GAC, the IPPF founded three regional comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) Centres of Excellence in Togo, Ghana and Colombia. These Centres work with youth to identify culturally-appropriate best practices in CSE for their country, deliver training, and build local capacity to deliver CSE and youth-centred SRHR services. In 2022, the project provided CSE to 119,422 young people, and trained 1,374 peer educators, teachers and facilitators to deliver the curriculum. Best practices based on this initiative have been shared with over 20 countries. CSE is critical so that adolescents are able to not only learn about biological changes, but also about how to make informed decisions about their bodies, including protecting themselves from unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, and SGBV. CSE has been specifically associated with

reduced HIV infection among young women. Canada has also provided Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, with \$75 million to relaunch their HPV coverage acceleration efforts in 2020, aiming to reach 86 million girls by 2025. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted viral infection of the reproductive tract and causes more than 95% of cases of cervical cancer. Vaccinations, combined with information and education, are shown to drive safe sexual behaviours, including increased condom use, preventative medical screening and testing for STIs.

Promoting access to family planning/contraceptives and safe abortion are two of the five neglected areas of SRHR that Canada is targeting through the 10YC. In 2021-22, Canada invested \$65.4 million in family planning and contraceptive services, representing a 32% increase from the previous fiscal year. Canada's supports the provision and distribution of contraceptives through key partnerships, including with UNFPA Supplies (\$25 million from 2021-2025). Canada also supports family planning through global partnerships, such as FP2030, and regional partnerships, such as the Ouagadougou Partnership (OP), which represents nine French-speaking West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo). The Partnership is on track to meet its goal of reaching 13 million modern contraceptive users by 2030.

In-line with the WHO Abortion Care Guideline, and based on evidence that demonstrates the importance of safe abortion in reducing maternal mortality and other obstetric-related health issues, Canada is committed to advancing its investments in safe abortion and post-abortion care. Funding in this area increased to \$4.1 million in 2021-2022, representing a 115% increase from the previous year. As with all the neglected areas, this total is expected to increase over time as Canada works to increase the percentage of funding allocated towards these priorities. Canada supports leading international partners that work to advance safe abortion globally in line with country laws and health priorities. Abortion related services include those to ensure women and adolescent girls can access safe and legal abortion services, post-abortion care, and counselling for family planning. Canada also funds Canadian organizations such as Grand Challenges Canada's OPTions Initiative (\$16 million, 2020-2028) which aims to decrease maternal mortality by decreasing complications and deaths from unsafe abortions. GAC is also supporting Oxfam Canada in its ongoing work advocating with Parliamentarians in Malawi for the passage of the Termination of Pregnancy Bill (which seeks to establish SRH services, including abortion care, as essential health services), and to expand the number of health facilities in Mozambique offering comprehensive abortion care services under the Her Future Her Choice project.

Recommendation 10: That the Government of Canada continue to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights around the world through local partnerships, in support of women's rights and feminist movements, and in accordance with internationally recognized human rights.

AND

Recommendation 11: That the Government of Canada increase the proportion of its international assistance that is being delivered to and through women's rights organizations, including those working to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Government welcomes these recommendations and highlights Canada's commitment to ensuring SRHR interventions in developing countries are locally-led and supported. Canada greatly values local partnerships, and recognizes the critical role that government and local organizations play in the delivery of international assistance programming. Aligned with the FIAP, Canada supports local ownership and works to ensure that all initiatives are grounded in real engagement with local communities, including being designed and implemented with and by local partners. Across Canada's international SRHR investments, all efforts are made to ensure that, where feasible and appropriate, government, local organizations and beneficiaries, including youth and WROs, are involved throughout the project cycle, from design to evaluation.

Funding through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), an international assistance program managed by Canadian Embassies or High Commissions to ODA-eligible countries, is a strong example of this approach. The CFLI was set up with the objective of addressing local needs through local partners; in 2022-2023, 20 CFLI projects addressed SRHR, totaling over \$700,000, half of which explicitly targeted youth beneficiaries.

Support for WROs and feminist movements is a cornerstone of the FIAP. WROs and feminist movements play a critical role in transforming entrenched social norms and practices and achieving sustained progress towards gender equality, including in the areas of SRHR. As per his 2021 mandate letter, the Minister of International Development is committed to increase funding to grassroots WROs and continue to work to close persistent gaps in SRH services, including in relation to the prevention of SGBV. Progress is being made including through Canada's leadership in the Equality Fund, the Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) Program, and the Alliance for Feminist Movements.

The WVL Program was launched in 2017 and is a flagship initiative of Canada's FIAP to support local WROs and LBTQI+ groups working for women's rights and gender equality. SRHR and SGBV are among the key areas that they work in; of the current 32 WVL projects, 44% are currently or have worked on issues related to SRHR. The program has exceeded expectations, reaching over 1,500 WROs and LBTQI+ groups in 31 developing countries and regions by March 2023, versus the original target of 400. The Minister of International Development announced the renewal and expansion of the WVL program in April 2023 with a \$195 million commitment over five years (2023-2024 to 2027-2028) and \$43.3 million per year thereafter. The announcement included an expanded geographic scope and enhanced support for WROs in crisis- and conflict-affected settings. The renewed WVL program is expected to support approximately 1,800 WROs, LBTQI+ organizations and women's networks.

Canada invested \$300 million into the creation of the Equality Fund, which was launched in 2019 to create a sustainable source of grant funding for local organizations and WROs and movements in developing countries. SRHR is one of the main areas of focus of Equality Fund grant recipients. Since 2019, through the support of the Government of Canada and other international donors, the Equality Fund has granted \$34.9 million to 119 WROs and women's funds, and to 571 WROs indirectly through on-grants from women's funds.

As a collective commitment of the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership at the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, Canada announced the creation of an Alliance for Feminist Movements (hereafter, "the Alliance"). The Alliance focuses on ensuring more and better financial and political support for women's rights and feminist organizations and movements and currently includes

over 350 members representing national governments, women’s funds, feminist CSOs, philanthropic organizations and other allies.

Recommendation 12: That the Government of Canada use its role in international forums like the G7 to catalyze further investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights programming and to advocate for the prioritization of sexual and reproductive health and rights globally.

AND

Recommendation 13: That the Government of Canada publish its Feminist Foreign Policy in a document that details principles, objectives, and guidelines for policy implementation, and which integrates Canada’s comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Government welcomes this recommendation and reiterates its commitment to implementing FIAP with its comprehensive approach to SRHR. Canada has been advancing a feminist approach to foreign policy for the past seven years, through policies, programs, and initiatives that apply to all of GAC’s international engagement, including relating to diplomacy, trade, peace and security, international assistance and consular services. These include Canada’s FIAP; the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; and the Trade Diversification Strategy, with its inclusive approach to trade. Our Feminist Foreign Policy advances Canada’s long-standing commitments to human rights, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, and seeks to dismantle persistent inequalities and address fundamental structural barriers, while accounting for the needs of those most affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The FIAP, with its comprehensive approach to SRHR, is a core component of Canada’s Feminist Foreign Policy.

In support of Canada’s feminist foreign policy objectives, Canada regularly engages in multilateral policy dialogue to advocate for enhanced prioritization of SRHR globally. In various multilateral and bilateral fora, including through the G7 and G20, Canada has consistently advocated for the inclusion of strong language on SRHR and ensuring that the global community does not backslide on previous gains. Under Japan’s 2023 G7 Presidency, Canada successfully advocated for reference to universal access to comprehensive SRHR for all in the G7 Leaders’ Communiqué, as well as language that committed to take action on the neglected areas of SRHR in the G7 Health Ministers’ Communiqué. This included reference to rights-based family planning, CSE, access to safe and legal abortion and post-abortion care, and SRHR advocacy. Canada has been equally vocal in G20 negotiations, ensuring that Communiqués in 2021 and 2022 reinforced the centrality of SRHR within health systems strengthening and PHC delivery.

Canada also leads the biennial resolution on “Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls in criminal justice detention”, which was adopted in July 2023, by consensus. The resolution expands the scope of services and information included under SRH (new additions include: post-violence care, prevention programs for adolescent pregnancy, SGBV prevention and menstrual health and hygiene) and secures language referring to bodily autonomy as a “right.”

Beyond multilateral fora, Canada leverages international events and various advocacy platforms to encourage bilateral and multilateral organizations to prioritize SRHR. Canada's Minister of International Development previously served, and Parliamentary Secretary Vandenberg currently serves as a SheDecides Champion, using their roles to promote comprehensive SRHR. SheDecides is a global movement that mobilizes political and financial support to increase access to SRHR in developing countries. Most recently at the Women Deliver Conference in July 2023, the Minister of International Development championed SRHR and women's rights in multiple plenary sessions and delivered remarks at the Champions Reception to underline Canada's bold and unwavering support for bodily autonomy and a woman's right to choose.

Recommendation 14: That the Government of Canada actively oppose coercive population control targeting Uyghur women as part of the ongoing Uyghur genocide, and call on governments and international bodies to reject and oppose coercive population policy.

The Government takes note of the recommendations and highlights Canada's strong commitment to bodily autonomy and women's and girl's rights. Canada's comprehensive approach to SRHR is guided by the principle that everyone has a right to make decisions about their own bodies, free of stigma, discrimination, and coercion. These decisions include those related to sexuality, reproduction, and the access to SRH services. Canada, therefore, supports the provision of essential and life-saving SRH services, so that these can be available for people to access at their choice and discretion. Canada also supports interventions beyond health services that address the gendered inequalities, discriminatory social norms and institutional structures, including laws and policies, to promote bodily autonomy and empower women to make their own choices about their bodies and SRH care.

With respect to Uyghur women specifically, Canada remains concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, China, and is concerned by the credible evidence that illustrates a systematic campaign of repression against Muslim minorities in the region. This includes credible indications of coercive enforcement family planning practices, such as forced abortions, forced sterilizations, and other forms of SGBV against women which may in certain cases amount to torture. Canada urges China to implement the recent UN recommendations on this situation, such as those from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).