

**JOINT PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Civil society welcomes Government's leadership on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and calls for increased investment in international development***

OTTAWA, 8 March 2017—Civil society organizations congratulated the Government today on its announcement which addresses an important gap, both globally and in Canada, in current efforts to promote women and girls' health and rights. By committing to support and promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) as an integral part of its feminist agenda for development, Canada is demonstrating global leadership at a time when the world needs it most. SRHR has long been neglected by the international system, and recent developments in the United States have only heightened the need for bold action and leadership on this issue.

**Welcome Bold Commitments on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights**

On International Women's Day, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister of International Development and La Francophonie Marie-Claude Bibeau announced \$650 million in funding over three years to support SRHR programming, which will complement ongoing Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) efforts. The announcement follows a \$20 million commitment made by Minister Bibeau on behalf of Canada at the "She Decides" high-level pledging conference last week in Brussels.

"We applaud the Government's commitment to increased funding for SRHR which is fundamental for making real progress on women's health and gender equality," Julia Sanchez, President-CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation said. "Empowering women and girls' through sexual and reproductive health is critical for their own development, and also has numerous positive effects on the development of their communities as a whole," she added.

**Importance of New Resources to Deliver on Canada's Leadership Promise**

This announcement comes as civil society, in a collaborative effort to enhance Canada's global contributions, is urging the Canadian government to increase its contribution to international development, as part of the Federal Budget 2017, expected on March 22nd. Canada's development assistance is well below the internationally agreed 0.7% target, and near an all-time low. At an estimated 26 cents for every \$100 of Gross National Income (GNI) in 2016, or 0.26%, Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) falls below the average of its peers – the G7 and open mid-sized economies. For 25 years, between 1970 and 1994, Canada committed more than 40 cents per \$100 of GNI and was above the weighted average of other OECD donors.

"Today's commitment positions Canada well to move the needle on gender equality, and improve the lives of women and girls on the ground. But this must not be at the expense of other successful programs that are underway and that address a whole host of complementary needs and rights" Sanchez pointed out. "In the context of a flat-lined Official Development Assistance budget, which is well below the levels expected from Canada, it is time for Canada to cement its

global leadership with a healthy and proportionate budget to support international development,” she added.

The Government is expected to establish its commitment to international development for the coming years in the forthcoming Federal Budget 2017, following extensive public consultations last year to refocus Canada’s international assistance programs.

-30-

## **Notes for Editors**

### **About the Canadian Council for International Co-operation**

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is Canada’s national coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) working globally to achieve sustainable human development. Our members represent a broad range of CSOs working in international development and humanitarian assistance — from faith-based and secular groups to labour unions, cooperatives and professional associations. CCIC seeks to end global poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all.

Many of CCIC’s members have long-standing commitment to SRHR and a range of deep and effective program and advocacy initiatives in this area. One of the strengths of our membership is the variety of perspectives, experiences and ongoing partnerships with women and girls in some of the most challenging parts of the world. CCIC and its members look forward to working with the Canadian Government on implementing the new SRHR priority.

### **About the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Collaborative Working Group**

A group of 13 organizations has been working together since 2016 to enhance Canada’s global contributions, including higher levels of ODA, and in response to the Liberal Government’s early announcement that Canada would re-engage as a global leader on the international stage. This group expects to see a timetable that commits to reaching 0.7% over the next 10 to 15 years, with predictable increases to the aid envelope over coming years, and with at least a 12% increase in 2017.

The organizations of the ODA Collaborative Working Group are: Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Canadian International Development Platform, The Canadian Partnership for Women’s and Children’s Health, Engineers Without Borders, Global Canada, Global Citizen, One Campaign, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam Quebec, Plan International Canada, Results Canada, Save the Children and World Vision Canada.

**For more information and media requests, including for interviews with the different organizations of the collaborative group, please contact:**

Chantal Havard, CCIC, Tel.: 613-241-7007 ext. 311 [chavard@ccic.ca](mailto:chavard@ccic.ca)