



IRELAND

Statement by

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Equality, Disability Issues and Mental Health**

to the

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Chairperson

I am pleased to associate myself with the Statement made by Spain on behalf of the European Union.

I am happy to tell you that gender equality has advanced significantly in Ireland since we gathered in Beijing to complete our excellent blueprint - the Platform for Action

Our sustained period of economic growth can be attributed in part to a marked increase of 400,000 or 60 per cent in the number of women at work in Ireland since the mid 1990s. To date, the economic downturn in Ireland has affected male unemployment more than female unemployment. In many instances, women's income has helped to boost the income levels of the large number of families where the male partner is receiving unemployment benefit.

The introduction of a national minimum wage, enhanced childcare services, increased maternity leave and increased child benefit have enabled women to meet both their work and family commitments and have led to a decrease in the gender pay gap in Ireland which is now below the EU average.

I am pleased to report that women have also been moving in increasing numbers into managerial and professional roles but are less frequently to be found in politics.

Later this year, we will undertake a three year evaluation of the comprehensive, ten year National Women's Strategy, published in 2007. This is timely, given the changed economic circumstances, in Ireland and across the globe. We will review progress on all the actions in the Strategy which together address socio-economic opportunity, women's well-being and equal and active citizenship for women. We will also use the review process to determine how best to address the needs of specific groups such as migrant women, many of whom have moved to Ireland in the last decade.

Mr. Chair

Since Ireland last made a Statement to the CSW in 2008, we have also strengthened our legislation and adopted a comprehensive action plan to address human trafficking. Early next week, we are publishing a new and comprehensive strategy to address the heinous crime of gender based violence. The five year strategy aims to reduce prevalence and to ensure that the system of prevention and response functions effectively in a co-ordinated manner, increasing the understanding awareness for both the public and professionals, supporting victims and ensuring the accountability of offenders.

Colleagues may already be aware that the promotion of gender equality is also a key priority in Ireland's overseas development programme - Irish Aid. Over the past 15 years, Irish Aid has focused on strengthening gender mainstreaming across its work. If we are to have a sustained impact on gender equality and on poverty, the gender focus must be an integral part rather than an "add-on."

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental human rights and essential to ensure effective and sustainable development efforts. Where women are empowered and there is more gender equality, there is less poverty and greater economic growth. Women have been shown to reinvest their gains in developing their families and communities.

The core priority of Ireland's aid programme is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, with a strong focus on the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Women suffer disproportionately from poverty and food insecurity. Ireland is taking a strong lead internationally on the hunger crisis, highlighting the over-riding importance of the first MDG, which aims to halve poverty and hunger. The Irish Government recognises the importance of women's role in agriculture and addresses the needs of women farmers in its policy and programmes.

Some of Irish Aid's programme countries experience the highest levels of maternal mortality in the world. Irish Aid is working with partner governments to strengthen health systems, to build capacity and integrate reproductive health and HIV and AIDS components into primary health care strategies and to combat Gender Based Violence

The UN recently made significant progress towards the achievement of the goal of gender equality, with the Resolution on the establishment of a 'Composite Gender Entity'. Ireland fully supports this progress in strengthening the capacity, accountability and effectiveness of the UN's work on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Implementation of Resolution 1325 is a key priority for Ireland. We have adopted an innovative approach to the development of our National Action Plan, working with participants from Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste and drawing upon the real experiences of those directly affected by conflict. We have appointed a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security to chair the initiative and expect to present the comprehensive outcomes to the United Nations later this year.

Mr. Chair, Colleagues

We, in Ireland, continue to make a strong commitment to the achievement of gender equality, both at home and across the globe. We appreciate and commend the ongoing work of the UN and its organisations, in supporting all aspects of women's lives, as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action. We pledge you our continuing support.

Thank you.