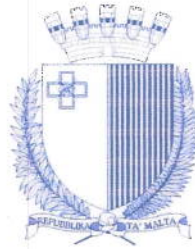


# MALTA



**Statement by**

**H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg**

**Ambassador**

**Permanent Representative of Malta**

**to the United Nations**

**Fifty-fourth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**Agenda Item 3 : Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"**

**Friday, 5th March 2010**

**United Nations, New York**

*(Please check against delivery)*

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Mr. Chairman,

Malta would like join other delegations in expressing our deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to the Government and People of Chile in the wake of the devastating earthquake.

Malta welcomes the Declaration adopted by this Commission last Tuesday and reaffirms Malta's commitment to the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Challenges to achieve this commitment remain. Yet, Malta intends to work with vigour and determination with the other UN Member States to face these challenges with the aim of ensuring that the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action are achieved.

Malta reiterates its view that safeguarding equal treatment between men and women in all spheres is fundamental to ensure equality of opportunities for both genders. In pursuance of this objective, the Maltese Government has taken different measures to integrate the gender perspective into national development strategies.

Whilst recognising that equality between women and men is crucial to sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion, the Maltese Government is committed to taking further measures to strengthen gender balance in the country and ensuring the growing presence of women in society, especially in key positions and in the decision-making process.

The Maltese Government has taken different measures to allocate resources to promote equality of opportunities to both genders in relation to the implementation of the critical areas delineated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

On Monday the H.E. The Minister of Equality of Spain addressed this meeting on behalf of the EU Member States. In this context, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to clarify Malta's position with respect to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As it did in numerous international conferences including the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing fifteen years ago, Malta would like to reaffirm today its stance that any position taken or recommendation regarding women's empowerment and gender equality should not in any way create an obligation on any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health rights, services or commodities. Malta continues to hold the view that any discussion of rights and services in connection with reproductive health cannot take place outside the framework of one of the most fundamental of human rights – the right to life. Malta strongly believes that the right to life extends to the unborn child from the moment of conception, and that therefore the use of abortion as a means of resolving health or social problems is a denial of that right.

It is within this framework of human rights – the right to life - that Malta has in these last fifteen years held high the Beijing Platform for Action. It is therefore in this spirit and commitment that Malta will continue to implement the values and objectives of international instruments including the Beijing Platform for Action.

In line with the Beijing Platform of Action, Malta dedicates particular importance to the family and its role as the basic unit of society. It is Malta's view that women must continue to play a critical role in the family. By empowering women the role of the family is strengthened. In this regard, Malta has enacted policies and measures to empower more women to enter or remain in the labour market. These include - offering training to engage mothers absent from the labour market; providing fiscal measures to mothers who return to the labour market after a five-year absence and mothers already in employment or who have not been absent for five years; enhancing child day care services, within specifically designed facilities or within private homes through Government regulated standards; and promoting flexible working arrangements and special leave provisions to help expectant mothers, fathers, parents and other employees to improve the quality of life of families and workers by facilitating the reconciliation of work and private life.

Malta has set up a firm legislative base to safeguard equal treatment between genders and to strengthen the national machinery for gender equality. In this regard, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) implements different measures that integrate the gender perspective into national development strategies. The direct involvement and participation of a diverse range of stakeholders in this process constitutes an effective collaborative and crucial dimension of the National Commission especially in the sharing of information, mutual learning and capacity building, besides engendering a stronger political commitment and leadership which is fundamental to ensure a greater priority to gender equality and empowerment of women. Malta also feels that data collection and the utilisation of sex-disaggregated data would strengthen the development of policies that are sensitive to circumstances and needs of both genders.

Malta supports, and is a party to, the international initiatives meant to eradicate violence against women. At the local level, through the enactment in 2006 of the *Domestic Violence Act*, Malta is addressing with vigour and determination this indefensible social malpractice by enhancing the protection, restraining and treatment order of victims and perpetrators in dealing with domestic violence. Furthermore, the *Equality for Men and Women Act*, provides adequate protection, assistance and support, to women who suffer from such a traumatic experience.

Results of the last Census of the National Statistics Office of Malta indicate that in the areas of ageing, marriage, education, qualifications, employment, independence and computer access, women with disabilities tend to be at a greater risk when it comes to gender equality. Conscious of such a reality, Malta continues to explore ways on how to eliminate the differences in the quality of life of men and women with disabilities.

Encouraged by the advancements made in recent years, gender mainstreaming is a national priority that will continue to be the catalyst in safeguarding equal treatment for both genders in all policies and measures. The exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences and good practices between States can be crucial in overcoming differences and finding greater convergence on actions and solutions.

Thank You