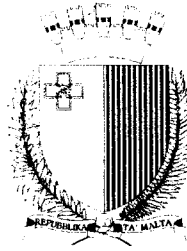


MALTA



Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Saviour F. Borg
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Malta
to the United Nations**

Third Committee

Item 56

Advancement of Women

Tuesday, 14th October 2008

United Nations, New York

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Mr. Chairman,

At the offset, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this august Committee.

Malta is fully committed towards the advancement of women in all spheres of life which aim to embrace equality and a true partnership between men and women in the sharing of responsibilities including those appertaining to families, careers and decision-making. Malta strongly believes that this position protects and consolidates such a partnership through the promotion of the right values of personal development for both men and women thus creating what we believe as the right role model for our present and future generations.

Mr Chairman,

I would like here to present succinctly Malta's views on the question concerning the advancement of women. But before doing that, my Delegation would like to state that the statement delivered by France on behalf of the EU Member States **generally** reflects Malta's position on the subject being considered by this Commission. In this context, Malta would like to clarify its position with respect to the language relating to the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The national legislation of Malta considers the termination of pregnancy through procedures of induced abortion as illegal, and does not recognise abortion as a measure of family planning. Malta has consistently expressed its reservation on the use of terms such as 'reproductive rights', 'reproductive services' and 'control of fertility', including in cases such as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Beijing Platform of Action (1994) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which Malta acceded in 1991. Whilst expressing its support for these Programmes and Instruments, Malta reiterates and upholds its reservations made at the time of their adoption.

At the same time, my Delegation has also taken note of a number of reports circulated by the Secretary General, such as the one on 'Supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula' and UNIFEM's Biennial Global Report (2008/2009). We have noted that these reports contain a number of references to 'sexual and reproductive rights' and 'reproductive health services', which Malta finds difficult to accept.

In this regard, Malta firmly continues to maintain that any position taken or recommendations made regarding women 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. We request that this position be put on the records of this meeting and be taken into account when preparing similar reports in the future.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Malta has on various occasions reiterated its commitment to gender equality, through both legal enforcement and the adoption of procedural measures. I would hereby like to mention a few of these measures that have been enacted by the Maltese Parliament in this regard, including:

1. Guidelines that apply to all programmes, including news and advertisements, broadcast on radio and television stations and are intended to make the broadcasting media more sensitive to gender equality.
2. An amendment to the Employment and Industrial Relations Act which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual harassment.
3. The provision to the Law on Access to Goods and Services and their Supply Regulation in 2008 which lays down a framework for combating discrimination based on gender in the access to and supply of goods and services, with a view to putting into effect in the access to such goods and services and their supply the principle of equal treatment between men and women.
4. Amendments to legislation bringing in harsher punishments for trafficking in women and girls.
5. Specific ICT courses for women to ensure availability of trained personnel while monopolising on all possible initiatives to increase female employment; and
6. The encouragement and support of specific initiatives such as female entrepreneurship.

In addition to the legislative measures, the Government of Malta continues to promote the advancement of women and gender equality in all areas and levels of Maltese society. This involves the mainstreaming of gender equality in all sectors of Maltese society, including awareness-raising on gender equality, and the integration of a gender perspective in all government policies, laws and projects.

It is in this spirit and conviction that Malta intends to work with other Member States and the wider UN System towards the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in all spheres.

Thank you.