



Women, Peace and Security – Consultation Document - Ireland’s Third National Action Plan

Submission on behalf of the Irish Federation of University Women (IrFUW)

The Irish federation of University Women (IrFUW) has been in existence for ninety years. It was established to unite the Irish Women Graduates’ Associations to uphold the aims of Graduate Women International (GWA) of which it is a constituent member. GWA is the leading women and girls’ global organisation run by and for women, advocating women’s rights, equality and empowerment for women and girls through access to quality education and training to the highest level. We are an all-Ireland network, with enduring links of collaboration and friendship between members and universities. We are involved with many NGO organisations and participate in both national and international events,

Nationally we organise an Annual Public Speaking event for teen-age girls. Chosen from schools from north and south, the students speak on topical subjects that are appropriate to their age. Our annual conference, organised on a rotational basis between the different graduate associations, centres on themes of political and cultural interest that reflect the aims of the organisation. As members of the University Women of Europe (UWE) we attend and participate in European gatherings to support our delegates in their work promoting the aims and objectives of our organisation at European Council level.

Internationally we are actively involved with the work of the Federation through its consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ESCOSOC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). In Ireland we support several overseas projects connected to creating opportunities for girls and women who lack opportunities due to conflict situations or natural disasters.

Our organisation is represented at the National Women’s Council Of Ireland with a member on the Executive Board.

IrFUW participated at the workshop on Ireland’s Second National Plan, October 2015, Table 10. We introduced the concept of ‘Education for All’. This generated an

energetic discussion and enthusiastic response. We are concerned that the issue of education for women and girls is not included in the Consultative Document for Ireland's Third Action Plan and does not reflect the interest in an area we know is of such importance to women.

We would advocate for Education in its broadest form as an overarching priority for the Third National Action Plan.

Pillar Four – Representation of Women in Decision Making

Education is the key to many of the issues outlined in the draft invitation paper for submissions but we feel that it is particularly relevant to Pillar Four. For women to participate fully there is a need for an educational system that encourages and promotes access to education in all its form, at every level and at all stages for women and girls. Education empowers women to confidently participate in the rebuilding of societies; to deal with the past, to learn, to plan for the future, to break the cycle of poverty and inequality. It enables them to take positions of leadership and to use their full potential in public and private life. Through education from earliest school days women learn to decide what type of community or model of society they want and how to construct the institutions to make peace possible and enduring. Through education in its broadest form we learn of responsibility, dignity, respect. It provides a way out of poverty.

It is especially relevant in a multi-cultural, multi-racial society where there is a need of greater understanding of cultural differences that encourages educated thinking and reflection combined with practical skills and professional levels for full participation in society.

Our vision is a world where women and girls have equal opportunity and equal access to quality education within a peaceful and secure environment without discrimination.

Therefore we believe that education for all should be incorporated into all aspects of Ireland's Third Action Plan. We hope to see a broadening of the Third Action Plan to incorporate areas as education in all its forms for women and girls.

Nuala Ryan

Irish Federation of University Women