

**IRISH STATEMENT**

**TO THE**

**60TH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**DELIVERED BY DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRELAND TO THE**

**UNITED NATIONS**

**18 MARCH, 2016**

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of Members States of the European Union.

2015 was a memorable year: We saw some successful agreements reached: the 2030 Agenda, COP21, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the High Level Review of 1325. As the international community turns our attention to realising the potential of these ambitious agreements, we know that the achievement of full human potential and sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.

We are also conscious of the important role of all human rights defenders, especially women human rights defenders and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Berta Cáceres whose murder was a shock to us all. We welcome the President of Honduras' request for timely support from OCHR in relation to this matter.

Mr Chairman,

Ireland is fully committed to ensuring that 'no one is left behind'. The negotiations on the 2030 Agenda, which we had the honour of co-facilitating, had widespread support for gender equality, and I welcome the broad consensus across the entire UN membership on the critical importance of empowering women and girls.

While the 2030 Agenda is at an early stage, the fight for gender equality is not. 2015 marked twenty years since the Beijing Conference. Speaking in New York last September, the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, noted

"If we do not enable the true empowerment of women and girls worldwide, our declarations will be shown to have been empty rhetoric.

We must change, gather momentum in our change, so that this does not happen.”

The Beijing and 2030 Agendas are interdependent and mutually supportive. In order to be a success we must break down silos as implementation plans are designed and rolled out. Gender equality is not the exclusive domain of equality ministries or of any one ministry, and structures currently being designed at the national level must reflect this, and allow for the essential contribution of civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

While Ireland has made progress towards achieving equality in our own country, and we have made gender equality a priority area of our foreign policy, our new universal commitments challenge us to make our strategies at home and abroad all the more robust. Last month, Ireland for the first time experienced a general parliamentary election with quotas for female candidates. I am pleased to say that the share of women among those elected rose by almost half, from 15% in the previous parliament to over 22% this time. While this is still a modest

proportion by international standards, the increase is significant and represents concrete progress towards our SDG commitment to give women a voice to ensure meaningful and effective democracy.

Mr Chairman,

Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. It transcends borders, class and culture. It is a universal challenge which undermines the health, well-being and livelihoods of millions of women around the world. Tackling it is every country's business. In the context of the new Agenda, we have an opportunity to realise a new future for our world, a world without early marriage, female genital mutilation and without a blind eye being turned to domestic and sexual violence.

It is essential to engage men and boys as partners in combating violence against women and girls and to challenge societal norms relating to masculinity, which have too often been drivers of such violence. In that regard Ireland is working towards ratifying the Istanbul Convention as part of our Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

We are also cognisant of the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls to violence and abuse in natural and man-made emergencies. In the past year, we have witnessed the number of refugees and displaced persons reach its highest level since figures were first recorded. This demands a global response. Ireland is committed to ensuring that issues of gender and violence against women and girls are meaningfully addressed at the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit and that these issues remain to the forefront of the international community's ongoing discussions on migrants and refugees.

Mr Chairman,

2016 is a unique year of opportunity for accelerating the international agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. We must enable women and girls to achieve their full potential in all social, economic, and cultural fields. Let us build upon the momentum of the 2030 Agenda. Let CSW lead the way. Let us identify key milestones for implementing the Agenda. Let us push for further change in critical areas that are holding women and girls back from the full realisation of their human rights.

Only this way can we ensure that every woman and girl leads a life of dignity and equal opportunity.