



UN Commission on the Status of Women, 64th Session

General Debate

9th March 2020, New York

National Statement of Ireland

Ireland aligns with the statement of the European Union.

Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

This is a milestone year for gender equality. It marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the most significant global agenda for the empowerment of women and girls. We can use this anniversary to recommit to working together to achieving global progress on gender equality.

Much has been achieved in the last 25 years. However, key challenges remain. Globally women and girls remain hardest hit by the effects of extreme poverty, climate change and conflict. Women and girls earn less, own fewer assets, and are underrepresented in economic and political decision-making processes. One in three women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. This is why Ireland has established gender equality as the first of

four policy priorities for Ireland's international development policy, *A Better World*, ensuring that we will have an overarching focus on women and girls in all our partnerships and interventions.

If we are to achieve a better future for women and girls, and indeed society as a whole, we need to mobilise available resources in a collective effort. At a time where the pushback against those who fight for gender equality is increasing, let us not forget the important role that civil society has to play. We need therefore to redouble our efforts to enable and protect civil society actors, including women human rights defenders.

Later this year we will mark another key anniversary. It is 20 years since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the first such resolution on women, peace and security.

Ireland remains committed to putting women and girls at the heart of our work to prevent and resolve conflict. This is reflected in our Third National Action Plan, adopted last year, which sets out an ambitious set of actions at home and abroad across development, humanitarian, peacekeeping and diplomatic engagement. Today we are as committed as ever to standing up, to raising our voice and to finding the resources to finally move beyond WPS rhetoric to reality on the ground.

Ireland stands ready to contribute to the Beijing+25 process over the course of this year, and in particular supports the Generation Equality Forum convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France. We also look forward to the high level event of the General Assembly in September.

In Ireland, we have taken important national steps to address gender inequalities, including those that impact women in the workplace. We are bringing in legislation on gender pay reporting. New laws assist parents in balancing work and caring responsibilities. These are designed to address significant barriers to workplace advancement for women. We are

working to get more women to senior decision-making positions in the private and public sector. The independent business-led initiative ‘Balance for Better Business’ aims to improve gender balance in senior business leadership in Ireland. Earlier this year a Citizen’s Assembly on gender equality was launched in Ireland, tasked with advancing gender equality by making proposals on a range of issues, including policy, legislative or constitutional change.

Mr Chairperson,

It is good to take stock of the last 25 years. But it is also important to look forward. In doing so, we need to listen to diverse voices, particularly those of young women and girls.

Key to empowering youth is ensuring full and equal access to education, and education for adolescent girls can act as the catalyst that can deliver on global commitments on gender equality. Ireland was proud launch earlier this year a global call to action – the Drive for Five - for all governments to commit to five transformative actions required to get all adolescent girls into school and provide them with quality, relevant education in supportive, safe and healthy environments.

Mr Chairperson,

As our *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* comes to a close, Ireland has a renewed opportunity domestically to take stock on gender equality in the coming years, and an important chance to develop new and progressive thinking on gender equality. This, along with the global stocktake on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action represents an opportune moment for reflection. However, the result of our reflection must be action. We must be willing to take bold steps to accelerate progress, and we must be prepared to take risks.

Thank you.