

**High-Level Event of the President of the General Assembly on the
Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015
Development Agenda**

**National Statement by
Ireland's Minister of State for Trade and Development Mr Joe Costello TD**

United Nations, New York, Thursday 6 March 2014

Check against delivery

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ensuring a Post 2015 framework that has the principles of equality, non-discrimination and respect for all human rights at its centre is an important priority for Ireland.

We strongly believe the framework must contribute to achieving *equality* between men and women, boys and girls.

Despite promising achievements in the area of gender equality, today millions of women and girls still suffer high levels of inequality in accessing economic opportunities, and basic services such as education and health. Women's participation in public life continues to be curtailed by laws and traditional practices. Violence against women remains an unacceptably pervasive human rights violation in many countries.

This is not only a fundamental violation of women's rights. It also represents a missed opportunity.

Women produce between 60 and 80 per cent of the food in most developing countries and are responsible for half of the world's food production. But, they have more difficulties than men in gaining access to resources such as land, credit and productivity-enhancing inputs and services. We will simply not achieve food and nutrition security and poverty eradication if we do not achieve gender equality.

The realisation of the rights of women and girls and their full participation and leadership must therefore be fundamental to *all* aspects of our deliberations on the Post 2015 agenda.

We must ensure that in addition to a standalone goal on gender equality, the new framework includes its effective mainstreaming across all other goals, targets and indicators.

We must build monitoring systems that can measure progress for women and girls, as well as men and boys.

We must ensure effective participation of women and girls at all stages of the design, implementation and monitoring of the Post 2015 framework,

Secondly, to be successful, the Post 2015 framework must also address the rights and needs of children and young people.

The new framework must do more than 'finish the job' of the MDGs. It must drive the achievement of basic standards of living for children and young people. This includes providing healthcare, quality education and food and nutrition security. It also must ensure decent work opportunities for young people when they reach adulthood.

Ending violence and exploitation of children – both boys and girls - will be crucial.

It is essential that any goal on eradicating hunger and malnutrition includes a target or targets, on reducing child stunting and wasting, and low-birth-weight, reducing anaemia, and increasing rates of exclusive breastfeeding for young infants.

We need to measure things like 'quality education' in the new framework. Foundation skills like literacy and numeracy are essential and the best way for young people to get these skills is through a complete primary and lower secondary education.

Tackling youth unemployment is critical. Education and skills training must be tailored to labour demands so that young people have the skills needed to engage in gainful employment.

Ireland supports the inclusion of goals and targets on education and employment in the new framework that will address these areas.

Finally, a vibrant and empowered civil society is essential.

Civil society plays a key role in ensuring the true realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It has a legitimate and important part to play in ensuring that governments are accountable to their citizens. Civil Society actors must therefore be empowered and afforded a safe enabling environment in which to effectively carry out their activities and operate free from harassment and intimidation.

Ireland has championed the importance of civil society space during our membership of the Human Rights Council. At the HRC's session in September 2013, we took the lead, with the support of a cross-regional core group of Member States, on a new resolution creating and maintaining, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment for civil society space.

We believe that protecting the space for civil society is necessary for the realisation of any of the goals under a new Post 2015 framework.

The Post 2015 framework must recognise this and include goals and targets that go to the core of ensuring civil society space. Priorities in this regard include the right to personal security and freedom from violence and ensuring justice for all. The right to seek and receive information, the freedom of the media and freedom of association and speech, as well as the right to participate in decision making are also essential.

It is vital that women, young people and civil society actors all continue to have a strong voice in our deliberations between now and 2015 – at national, global and regional level – both in agreeing the Post 2015 framework, and in its future implementation.

Thank you.