

Statement by

H.E. Mr. David Donoghue
Permanent Representative

at the

UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

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Madam President,

Ireland commends you for organising today's debate and its particular focus on refugee and displaced women and girls. Ireland aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and that of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network.

We welcome today's Presidential Statement which recognises the heightened risks faced by refugee and internally displaced women and girls.

Madam President,

This debate could not be more timely. Today, as a result of the proliferation of crises and protracted conflicts, we are confronted with the highest number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons since the end of the Second World War with more than 51 million affected.

If this number represented a country, Madam President, it would be greater than the population of Argentina and would be approaching that of the Republic of Korea. It is a simple fact that the majority of this vast wave of dislocated humanity comprises women and girls. It is also a fact that they face multiple forms of discrimination and violations.

Madam President,

In **Syria** we have witnessed the largest one year refugee exodus since the Rwandan genocide 20 years ago with almost a third of the country on the move involuntarily.

In **South Sudan**, where more than 1 million displaced people are surviving in dire conditions, the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Madam Bangura attested to the "*unimaginable living conditions, acute day-to-day protection concerns and rampant sexual violence*" in the country. One survivor told her that "*It's not just about rape – it is to break your dignity*".

Madam President,

We know that the numbers are increasing manifold and the specific threats of conflict on women and girls present themselves in some very old ways and also in new and disturbing ones. But it is to be welcomed that today's debate takes full account of Resolution 2122 and moves away from a narrow view of women as victims of their circumstance, and looks to discuss ways that they are often leaders within their communities, who must be politically, socially and economically empowered. The emphasis in today's Presidential Statement on the need to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women and girls throughout all stages of the displacement cycle is welcomed.

But there is quite evidently a significant gap in implementation, as the most recent report of the Secretary-General outlines, and there is a need to link the WPS agenda to other policy frameworks. The yardstick for change lies at the level of implementation and the challenge before us is to translate political commitments into real, positive improvements in the lives of women and girls affected by armed conflict.

Madam President,

In addition to confronting sexual violence in conflict, there is also a need to improve the protection afforded to women and girls in humanitarian emergencies.

The protection of women and girls is one of the key criteria in our decisions on humanitarian funding, including in programmes of support to displaced persons. Our National Action Plan on Resolution 1325, which is currently being updated, also prioritises empowerment and access to services of refugee and asylum-seeking women in Ireland.

At the last open debate on WPS in April, Ireland supported a discussion with Madam Bangura and a representative of civil society and former refugee, Ms Naw K'nyaw Paw. Fleeing persecution Ms K'nyaw Paw's family joined 110,000 Karen people now living in refugee camps that run the length of the Thai-Myanmar border. In line with Resolution 2122 we must step up efforts to support her leadership and that of thousands like her. We must listen to, invest in, and build the capacity of individual women and of women-led civil society organisations to ensure durable solutions.

Madam President,

Throughout the WPS agenda, the lack of a clear evidence base remains a challenge. Greater access to data is the only way by which we can truly assess progress and identify barriers to implementation. Ireland supports the increased use of sex and age-disaggregated data in the design and implementation of programmes. Evidence shows us that gender markers contribute to better planning and understanding of how the WPS agenda is funded. We know this from having participated in an assessment of the IASC Gender Marker. Ireland welcomes the Secretary General's recent report which suggests this Council request data and analysis on the situation of women and girls on a more frequent basis. We also welcome the call by this Council in today's Presidential Statement for more systematic collection, analysis and utilisation of sex and age-disaggregated data.

Madam President,

The Arms Trade Treaty is the first legally binding, international agreement adopted by the UN General Assembly to regulate international transfers of conventional weapons and ammunition. It has been ratified by 80% of the members of this Council and is also the first treaty to recognise the links between the international arms trade and gender-based violence. Both of these firsts signify meaningful advancement for international humanitarian law, human rights, and peace and security. As one of the Treaty's strongest supporters we look forward to its coming into force within a number of weeks. However, we need to ensure gender criteria and related commitments are given full attention in its implementation.

Madam President,

As we look towards the High-Level Review of Resolution 1325 next year, we must fully grasp this opportunity to assess just how much we have achieved in the last 15 years; take stock of where we have been impactful; review trends; fill knowledge gaps; critically examine persistent and emerging challenges and capture lessons learned and good practices across all regions. Last month, Ireland was delighted to co-host the launch of the Global Study to review Resolution 1325 and we will continue to support the Study over the coming months.

In conclusion, Madam President, we need to move beyond mere potential and opportunity and effect real change in the lives of women and girls.

We need more consistent and systematic application of Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions.

We need to be ambitious in driving local ownership and in addressing the root causes of why women and girls are so disproportionately affected by conflict.

And we need to ensure that women are fully and effectively empowered as key stakeholders in the prevention and resolution of conflict.

Thank you.