

Mr. President

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement which we had originally planned to deliver on the twenty ninth special session of the General Assembly on 22 September.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered on that occasion by the European Union.

At the outset Ireland wishes to express our appreciation to the UN Secretary General, to UNFPA and to the other organisations involved in providing us with the relevant reports.

We appreciate in particular the substantial scale and the participatory nature of these exercises and consider that they provide a comprehensive and robust evidence base for our discussions, particularly in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. President

Twenty years ago the ICPD established a global consensus that the recognition and fulfilment of human rights must be at the centre of any development agenda.

As we mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action, it is clear that much progress has been made. However, the reports before us also highlight the fact that “aggregate progress” often masks “significant unfinished business” particularly when it comes to women’s empowerment and in terms of access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

The reports echo the conclusions from other fora that inequalities, both between and within countries, stubbornly persist. Those who have been left behind by inequality and discrimination, particularly women and girls must now be given our absolute priority.

The reports also highlight the new challenges that we must incorporate into our response including climate change; migration; urbanisation; and the increased percentages of young and older cohorts in our societies.

Ireland remains fully committed to playing our part in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action.

Last year, we launched Ireland’s latest Policy for International Development which recommits us to the protection and promotion of human rights throughout all our work. The Policy also contains an explicit commitment to the Cairo Programme of Action, through supporting efforts that reduce maternal and infant mortality; promote universal access to reproductive healthcare - including ante-natal care; and provide family planning services which support safe motherhood while allowing women to control their fertility.

In conclusion, let me state clearly that Ireland reaffirms our strong support for the ICPD Programme of Action. Twenty years on from Cairo we are at a critical junction. As we prepare to finalise the post-2015 development agenda, the principles, the objectives, and the outstanding commitments from the ICPD - as well as the Beijing Platform for Action – simply must be at the centre of the development agenda in the years ahead.

9 October 2014