

**UN Commission on the Status of Women, 61st Session
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Statement by Ireland

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Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to address the Commission today and I would like to thank the Secretary General for his report on ‘Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work’ which sets out the challenges and opportunities we face in realising this goal.

The Government of Ireland is committed to building a fair society that delivers a strong economy, and to ensuring each of our over two million women and girls live a fulfilling life, whatever path she chooses. Together with the active involvement of our social partners and civil society, including the National Women’s Council of Ireland, we are working to finalise Ireland’s second

National Women's Strategy. Its guiding vision is that of "an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.

One of the objectives of the National Strategy is to achieve socio-economic equality and we realise that despite a number of achievements in recent years, we still have a long way to go. While fewer women than men are unemployed, their labour market participation rate, at 53%, is still substantively lower than that of their male colleagues, at 67%

We recognise that one of the biggest obstacles to increasing labour market participation of women is the unbalanced share out of caring roles and we are taking a number of initiatives in this respect. The Single Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will come into operation next September, will provide both universal and targeted subsidies for parents towards their childcare costs in a single streamlined scheme. The Government has committed to significantly increase paid parental leave in the first year of a child's life over the next five years and, in addition, we introduced paternity leave last September.

Equal pay for equal work and work of equal values is a legal requirement in Ireland. Nevertheless we still have a gender pay gap of 13.9%, down from 17.3% in 2007. Far more women than men rely on the minimum wage and, starting in May 2016, we will increase this payment in incremental steps over a five year period. Other measures, to be introduced under the National Women's Strategy include the promotion of wage transparency and strengthening the regulation of precarious work.

Ireland also recognises the diversity of women and the need to address the special situation of Traveller, migrant and refugee women and women with disabilities

As Minister for International Development, I am proud that gender equality and women's empowerment are at the core of the Irish Aid programme and that we place a strong emphasis on the reduction of inequalities between women and men in accessing resources, services and opportunities.

In many of our partner countries, agriculture remains the most important source of work for many women. We work through government, the United

Nations and civil society to empower female farmers to have greater access to and control over land, finances, water and markets.

We also support the design and implementation of sustainable social protection programmes that address gender inequality - with a focus on the most vulnerable such as female headed households, among other groups.

Education is doubly positive for development and poverty reduction. We know that when girls stay in school for just one extra year of primary school that can boost their eventual wages by 10 to 20 per cent. We also know that when women get extra earnings, they reinvest that back in their families and back in their communities.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, as a co-facilitator of the negotiations that led to agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals, Ireland worked to ensure that gender equality became a core priority of the 2030 Agenda. We will continue to advocate for the economic empowerment of women and girls during our forthcoming membership of the Commission on the Status of Women. We will do this as we believe that investments in this area will have a transformative impact on progress towards the Sustainable Development

Goals on gender equality, sustainable economic growth, ending poverty and ensuring no-one is left behind.

Thank You