

**UN Commission on the Status of Women, 62nd Session
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Statement by Ireland

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

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates.

I am honoured to address the Commission today. I welcome in particular the priority theme chosen for this year which allows us to reflect on how we can work to achieve gender equality and empower rural women and girls.

Ireland is strongly committed to realising gender equality both at home and abroad. In May last year, we adopted the National Strategy for Women and Girls for the period 2017 to 2020. Developed following extensive consultation with social partners, civil society and public and private sector stakeholders, it aims to advance socio-economic equality for women and girls and their physical and mental health and well-being, as well as to ensure full participation of women and girls in society and their equal and active citizenship. It promotes the advancement of women in leadership at all levels and seeks to embed gender equality in decision-making. Finally a key objective of the strategy is to combat violence against women.

Work is progressing across all areas of Government on actions to advance these objectives. For example, on the gender pay gap, we plan to introduce legislation which will require companies to publish data on hourly pay for women and men. We will also introduce measures to assist companies to tackle this problem. Paid parental leave in the first year of a child's life will be increased and we will encourage fathers in particular to avail of this

facility. Finally, we are also looking at how we can increase the participation of women in senior management and on company boards.

The National Strategy on Women and Girls links to a number of other Government policy initiatives and strategies. For example, the Strategy commits the Government to take gender equality into account in the implementation and monitoring of our Action Plan for Rural Development.

Globally, we know that rural women and girls, who form up to one quarter of the world's population, very often face particular challenges especially in the areas of poverty and discrimination. In many places these challenges are made even more difficult by the adverse impact of climate change and migration as well as that of conflict.

For sustainable development to take root, Ireland believes that there must be gender equality. For rural women and girls to be empowered, their rights, including the right to food, education, livelihoods and personal security, must be met. For them to realise their full potential, rural women need to be able to own and make decisions on property and assets. So, for example, we need to look at issues around laws and policies on land and inheritance rights. We also need to think about how we ensure access to public services and social protection for rural women and girls.

Ireland is working with partners to improve women's rights in agriculture. We support measures to increase women's access to critical resources such as land and credit. We have also increased our efforts to respond to climate change and environmental degradation faced by poor rural communities.

Rural women and girls can be impacted disproportionately by conflict and gender-based violence. In our second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security, we recognise the importance of including diverse women's voices, including those of rural women and girls, in processes to resolve conflict and address post-conflict situations. Ireland also supports a range of initiatives to support the implementation of laws and policies that address gender – based violence.

In conclusion Madam chair,

In our efforts to realise the Sustainable Development Goals and as responsible global citizens, we want to ensure that that no one is left behind. Rural women and girls are often the farthest and hardest to reach. But that should not deter us from redoubling our efforts to ensure that they too can benefit from our collective ambition to end poverty and hunger by 2030.